

SHAKESPEARE  
THE  
MERCHANT OF VENICE

EDITED BY  
A. W. VERITY, M.A.  
SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE

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## NOTE

I HAVE the pleasure to acknowledge my great obligations to Dr Furness's Variorum edition of *The Merchant of Venice*.

The Index was compiled for me.

A.W.V.

December 9, 1897.

## NOTE TO SEVENTH EDITION

IN this Edition some new notes have been inserted, and a fuller section, based partly on Dr Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar* and other authorities, has taken the place of the previous one on Metre. Many references to the names of commentators and to sources of information and criticism have been removed, some such phrase as "editors" or "critics" being generally substituted. The removal tends, I think, to make the book simpler for young students, without (I hope) obscuring my great indebtedness to other editors, more especially to Dr Furness.

A.W.V.

September, 1907.

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# INTRODUCTION

## I

### DATE OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE PLAY

*The Merchant of Venice* was entered on the Register of the Stationers' Company on July 22, 1598.

It was entered with the proviso that it should not be published till the Lord Chamberlain had given his consent. As patron of the company of actors called "the Lord Chamberlain's Servants," which were, no doubt, performing this play and to which Shakespeare himself belonged, the Lord Chamberlain probably withheld his consent for some time; and *The Merchant of Venice* did not appear in print till 1600. Two Quarto editions were issued in that year.

*Entered on  
the Stationers'  
Register in  
1598.*

*Published in  
1600.*

*Quarto  
editions.*

The title-page of one reads thus: *The Excellent History of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreme cruelty of Shylocke the Jew towards the saide Merchant, in cutting a just<sup>1</sup> pound of his flesh. And the obtaining of Portia, by the choyse of three Caskets. Written by W. Shakespeare. Printed by J. Roberts, 1600.*

The title-page of the other Quarto runs: *The most Excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreame crueltie of Shylocke the Jewe towards the sayd Merchant, in cutting a iust pound of his flesh: and the obtayning of Portia by the choyse of three chests<sup>2</sup>. As it hath beene diuers times acted by the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants. Written by William Shakespeare. At London. Printed by I. R. for Thomas Heyes, 1600.*

The Quarto published by Roberts is commonly regarded as the first edition of the play, and the best authority for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. iv. 1. 325.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. i. 2. 27, 28, "these three chests of gold, silver and lead"; and ii. 9. 23, "What says the golden chest?" But "casket" is, of course, the commoner description in the play; cf. i. 2. 85, 88, 96 etc.

its text. Probably each was printed, not from the original manuscript but from a transcript of a stage-copy; the variations of the two Quartos representing the mistakes made by the two transcribers<sup>1</sup>.

A third Quarto, being a reprint of Heyes' edition, appeared in 1637, and a fourth in 1652. They are evidence of the continued popularity of the play, but, except in a single place<sup>2</sup>, neither has any textual interest<sup>3</sup>.

In the 1st Folio<sup>4</sup> (1623) *The Merchant of Venice* was printed from the inferior of the original Quartos —that is, the Heyes Quarto. The differences between the Heyes Quarto and the Folio are inconsiderable. The most noticeable of those to which editors have called attention are (a) the substitution<sup>5</sup> of "other lord" for "Scottish lord" in 1. 2. 69, and (b) the softening of certain expressions<sup>6</sup>, in obedience to the Act (1605) of James I. forbidding profanity on the stage.

On the whole, the text of *The Merchant of Venice* does not present great difficulties. Its basis is the Roberts Quarto, checked by comparison with the Heyes Quarto, which sometimes furnishes a better reading, and with the version in the 1st Folio.

<sup>1</sup> Furness, p. 276. But possibly the Quartos were printed from different stage-copies.

<sup>2</sup> The exception is III. 2. 112; see the note.

<sup>3</sup> The fourth Quarto has a certain historical interest in that it was issued just when the Jews (who had been expelled from this country in 1290) "were beginning to ask for re-admission into England, and the consideration of their request to be seriously entertained." The request evoked bitter popular opposition, "and it must be allowed that the re-exhibition of Shylock in 1652 could scarcely have tended to soften this general disposition...Such a figure, seen at such a time, could scarcely have promoted the cause of the outcasts of Israel." (Professor Hales, quoted by Furness, pp. 273, 274.)

<sup>4</sup> The first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays, and the earliest authority for the text of many; indeed, but for it they would be lost.

<sup>5</sup> See the note on 1. 2. 69.

<sup>6</sup> See the note on 1. 2. 102.

## II

## DATE OF COMPOSITION

If the text is a comparatively easy matter, the question of the date of composition is difficult.

We have seen that the play was entered on the Register of the Stationers' Company in July, 1598. It is mentioned by Meres in *Palladis Tamia*<sup>1</sup>, 1598. That it cannot, therefore, have been written later than 1598 is the only certain thing about its date of composition.

*Date of composition.*

*Before 1598.*

One view is that it was first produced in 1594. An entry in the Diary of the theatrical manager Henslowe mentions, under the date August 25, 1594, "the Venesyon comodey" (i.e. the Venetian comedy) and speaks of it as a *new* play. Some editors believe that the entry refers to *The Merchant of Venice*. They hold that the comparatively early date 1594 is made probable (a) by some general indications of early workmanship in the play, such as the number of classical allusions and rhymed five-foot<sup>2</sup> lines (b) by certain resemblances<sup>3</sup> to *The Two Gentlemen of*

*Arguments in favour of 1594.*

*"The Venesyon comodey."*

*Signs of early work.*

<sup>1</sup> Or *Wit's Treasury*, published in the autumn of 1598; a sort of survey of English literature, comparing modern writers with ancient. Meres mentions six of Shakespeare's comedies and six of the tragedies.

<sup>2</sup> In estimating the bearing of the rhyme test we must of course exclude the Song (III. 2. 63-72) and the "scrolls" in the caskets. Moreover, it should be observed that in some places (e.g. III. 2. 106-113 and 139-148) the rhyme seems specially designed as an epigrammatic or sententious summing up of the situation. Thus the rhyme in Bassanio's speech (III. 2. 139-148) not only follows naturally on the rhyme of the "scroll," but also gives his remarks a terseness and point appropriate to the close of all his doubts and fears; it finishes that chapter of his life (like the rhymed couplet at the end of a scene), and he now starts another as Portia's accepted lover.

<sup>3</sup> "The play is allied to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in the prominence given to the theme of friendship between men, as

*Verona*, which Dr Dowden assigns to 1592-1593. But the entry in Henslowe's Diary is too vague to justify any positive conclusion: it was a very common practice with Elizabethan dramatists to lay the scenes of their plays in Italy, and "the Venetian comedy" may quite well have stood for some other piece. And as regards those indications of early workmanship on which stress is laid by some critics, I doubt whether they are really much more conspicuous in *The Merchant of Venice* than in the group of confessedly later comedies<sup>1</sup>. *Twelfth Night*, for instance, actually has a larger percentage of rhyme<sup>2</sup>.

*Arguments  
in favour of  
a later date  
than 1594.*

On the other hand, the merits of *The Merchant of Venice*, in particular the rich characterisation and masterly manipulation of a complex plot, point to a later date than 1594<sup>3</sup>: it seems too good (if

also in the resemblance of Launcelot and Nerissa to Launce and Lucetta, while the dialogue [1. 2] between Portia and her waiting-woman about the suitors is a wittier and more elaborate version of that [*The Two Gentlemen*, 1. 2] between Julia and her maid. But the style marks a considerable advance upon that of *The Two Gentlemen*, for the blank verse is fuller in tone and more varied in cadence, and for the first time prose is used in serious scenes"—F. S. Boas ("Shakspeare and his Predecessors," p. 215).

<sup>1</sup> *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *As You Like It* (1599), *Twelfth Night* (1600-1601).

<sup>2</sup> viz. 120 rhymed lines out of 2684, compared with 93 out of 2705 in *The Merchant of Venice*.

<sup>3</sup> Another argument which has been brought forward in support of 1594 deserves, at least, mention. A Jew named Roderigo Lopez, well known in London as physician to Queen Elizabeth, was tried on a charge of being implicated in a Spanish plot to poison the Queen, and hanged in June 1594. The case excited a great sensation in London. One of his foremost adversaries in it was a Portuguese adventurer called Don Antonio Perez. The supposition is that this affair directed Shakespeare's attention to the Jews, and that Dr Lopez was, to some extent, the prototype and "original" of Shylock. Stress is laid on the name *Antonio*. But the great objection to this theory, surely, is that it attributes so unworthy an origin to *The Merchant of Venice*. It seems to me to imply that Shakespeare hastily wrote the play representing the Jews in an odious

one may put the case crudely) to have been written quite so early. Two years would count for much in the development of Shakespeare's genius and mastery of his art, and it happens that, apart from the greater probability of a later date on purely æsthetic grounds, there are several pieces<sup>1</sup> of evidence which point to 1596. *Evidence pointing to 1596.*

(1) Shylock's speeches in the earlier part of the Trial-scene present two or three similarities to passages<sup>2</sup> in Silvan's *Orator*, the English version of which appeared in 1596. Possibly the resemblances are accidental; possibly Shakespeare read the original French. But it certainly seems likely that the *Orator* was known to him, and known, as to English readers in general, through the translation (1596).

(2) The opening of the last Act of *The Merchant of Venice* is imitated<sup>3</sup> clearly in a play entitled *Wily Beguiled*. The date of *Wily Beguiled* is not known definitely; but it is believed to have been written about 1596-1597.

(3) The incident of a Jew whetting his knife like Shylock occurs in a Latin play, *Machiavellus*, performed at St John's College, Cambridge, at Christmas, 1597. Of course, the writer may have taken the incident from the ballad of *Gernutus* (see pp. xvii, xviii), though we cannot say whether the ballad preceded *The Merchant of Venice*.

light (for Shylock is odious, though his Christian enemies are not blameless), to take advantage of, if not to gratify, the vulgar passion and prejudice against them which the trial of Dr Lopez had excited. It appears unfair to suppose that Shakespeare would do anything of the sort. What is fair, however, is to note how recollection of the case may have increased the popular interest aroused by the character of Shylock. (The whole subject is worked out by Sir Sidney Lee.) There is an allusion to Dr Lopez in *Doctor Faustus* xi., inserted after Marlowe's death: "Doctor Fustian [meant as a pun on *Faustus*] quotha? Doctor Lopus was never such a doctor." See Dr Ward's ed., p. 192; Mr Lytton Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex* (1928), vi.

<sup>1</sup> Remarkd by various editors.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 169-171.

<sup>3</sup> One or two minor imitations in the play have also been noticed.

Now there is, obviously, an element of uncertainty about each of these three pieces of evidence. It is, however, noteworthy that all three point to the period 1596-1597. As that period is, on the whole, more appropriate to the general characteristics of the play than so early a date as 1594, I do not think that we can be far wrong in accepting 1596. At any rate we shall err, if at all, in very good company. "Perhaps 1596 is as likely a date as we can fix upon," says Dr Dowden; and several other good scholars agree<sup>1</sup>.

*Conclusion that 1596 is the likeliest date of composition.*

Yet another view, however, must be mentioned. It has been suggested that *The Merchant of Venice* was originally written about 1594 (and may perhaps be identified with "the Venesyon comodey" of Henslowe's Diary), but was partly rewritten several years later, i.e. some time between 1594 and 1600 (the date of publication). This theory would help to explain on the one hand the marks of early workmanship, and on the other the fullness of characterisation and finished evolution of plot. But it is a theory which one should be slow to adopt except under pressing necessity. Once we begin to pick a play to pieces and assign the parts to different dates, we find ourselves involved in all sorts of uncertainties. And surely *The Merchant of Venice*, taken as a whole, presents a wonderful unity and evenness of effect. All seems too well-digested and finely balanced to be the outcome of a revision of an imperfect draft. A critic says rightly:

*Why an unsatisfactory theory.*

*Uniform excellence of the play as a whole.*

"It evinces, in a considerable degree, the easy, unlaboured freedom of conscious mastery; the persons being so entirely under the author's control, and subdued to his hand, that he seems to let them act and talk just as they have a mind to. Therewithal, the style throughout is so even and sustained; the word and character are so fitted to each other; the laws of dramatic proportion are so well

<sup>1</sup> "We may arrive not unreasonably at the conclusion that *The Merchant of Venice* was a new play in 1596"—*Halliwel*. "1596"—*Furnivall*. "The play may perhaps safely be dated 'about 1596'"—*Gollancz*.

observed; and the work is so free from any jarring or falling out from the due course and order of art; as to justify the belief that the whole was written in the same stage of intellectual growth."

Therefore let us have one date, and let that date be 1596.

### III

#### THE SOURCES OF THE PLAY

Shakespeare evidently cared little about originality of plot and incident. It is in the treatment of incident and the depiction of character that his dramatic genius is shown preeminently. *The Merchant of Venice* is a signal illustration. The main action is composed of two stories or plots: the Bond-story<sup>1</sup> and the Caskets-story. Each was of great antiquity. Probably they had previously been combined in a play.

(1) His immediate source for the Bond-story, of which there were numerous versions in various languages<sup>2</sup>, was a tale contained in an Italian collection of stories called *Il Pecorone*. The author was one Ser. Giovanni Fiorentino. He wrote or compiled *Il Pecorone* in 1378, but it was not published till 1558. It is a series of tales told in "days" after the manner of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*. Probably *Il*

*The incidents of the play not, in the main, original.*

*The Bond-story due to "Il Pecorone."*

<sup>1</sup> Some scholars prefer a rather grim description, viz. "the pound-of-flesh story." With regard to this story, which from the modern point of view is so strange, it should be remembered that the Roman law of the Twelve Tables authorised the maiming of a debtor by his creditors; and it expressly provided against Portia's point "nor cut thou less nor more" etc. (iv. 1. 323, 324), by saying *si plus minusve secuerint, sine fraude esto* = "if any of them have got [i.e. cut] more or less than his fair share, this shall not expose him to a penalty." Furness, pp. 416, 417.

<sup>2</sup> The story in its bare outline is one of those wide-spread, immemorial legends which cannot be traced to any particular source. As is usually the case with them, it is commonly attributed to an Oriental origin. Cf. Douce: "A part of the novel in the *Pecorone* is most likely of Oriental origin, and might have been transmitted to Ser. Giovanni from the same

*Pecorone* was one of the many Italian<sup>1</sup> books, especially stories (*novelle*), translated into English in the Elizabethan age. No copy, indeed, of an Elizabethan translation is known to be extant, but one may fairly assume that there was a translation, and that through it Shakespeare became acquainted with the version of the Bond-story which is followed in *The Merchant of Venice*. That we can with justice say "followed" will be clear to anyone who examines the story<sup>2</sup> (or Johnson's outline) as told in *Il Pecorone*.

*The chief  
points of re-  
semblance.*

In the tale the main scene is laid in Venice, to which the "merchant" belongs, while the Jew usurer lives a few miles away; the money is borrowed on practically the same conditions and for the same purpose as in the play; the lady who corresponds to Portia lives at "Belmonte<sup>3</sup>"; she comes to Venice disguised as a lawyer and gives the same solution of the case as Portia, after first of all buoying the Jew up with hope that the forfeiture will be granted to him; as a reward for her services, she is offered the money previously offered to the Jew, refuses it and asks for her husband's ring—whence much the same complications as in the play; and at the close her husband's friend<sup>4</sup> marries the waiting-maid who answers to Nerissa. Shakespeare's indebtedness therefore to *Il Pecorone* admits of no dispute. There were other sources from which he might have taken the idea of the Bond-story—viz. a Jew's claim of a pound of flesh as the

source that supplied Boccaccio and many of the French minstrels with their stories, viz. the Crusades." The earliest English version of the story occurs in the translation (dating from the close of the 13th century) of the *Cursor Mundi*. "But that has no lady in it, tho' it has a Jew"—*Furnivall*. In all but one of the other versions quoted by editors it is not a woman who baffles the Jew, but a man, e.g. the Pope in one story, the Emperor Solyman of Turkey in another, a Judge in others.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 174, last footnote.      <sup>2</sup> See Appendix, pp. 166-168.

<sup>3</sup> Note the name, which is conclusive evidence: also that in the other versions (as already said) it is a man who thwarts the Jew.

<sup>4</sup> That is to say, the merchant Ansaldo = the Antonio of the play.



penalty for the forfeiture of a bond—but none in which the idea is worked out with details so closely allied to the story in *The Merchant of Venice*. Therefore among the sources of the play *Il Pecorone* stands first, the Bond-story being the chief story.

(2) Next comes the popular collection of stories known as the *Gesta Romanorum*<sup>1</sup>, of which there was an oft-issued translation<sup>2</sup>. Here Shakespeare found the Caskets-story. Like the Bond-story, it has a long history.

*The Caskets-story due to the "Gesta Romanorum."*

"The story<sup>3</sup> of the caskets is first found in the mediæval romance *Barlaam and Josaphat*, written in Greek by Joannes Damascenus, about 800. *History of this story.* The device is there used by a king to teach his courtiers the vanity of appearances. In Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and likewise in Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, there is a story of a king who uses caskets to point a moral, but merely that of the capriciousness of fortune. The *Gesta Romanorum* contains the version which Shakespeare adopted with modifications in his play. An emperor of Rome, in order to test the character of the lady whom his son is to marry, makes her choose one of three caskets, of

<sup>1</sup> "A Latin collection of anecdotes and tales, probably compiled about the end of the 13th century or the beginning of the 14th...one of the most popular books of its time"—*Encyclopædia Britannica*. It is not known in what country the collection first appeared, but the compiler was probably a monk, each tale being made to point a moral illustrating the virtues of Christianity. Though called the "Deeds of the Romans," the book brings together all sorts of legends, European and Oriental, besides those drawn from Roman history and myth. There are in it rough versions of some of the oldest and most widely diffused tales, e.g. one similar in its main features, but with different names, to the Lear legend, and part of Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale."

<sup>2</sup> A "*Record of Ancyent Historyes* intituled in Latin *Gesta Romanorum*." "The editions [of this English translation] that were popular in Queen Elizabeth's reign were brought out by one Richard Robinson, and to the number of no less than six between 1577 and 1601"—*Furness*.

<sup>3</sup> I borrow Mr Boas's excellent summary (p. 216).

gold, silver, and lead, with inscriptions<sup>1</sup> almost the same as those in *The Merchant of Venice*."

The similarity of the inscriptions is the conclusive piece of evidence in this case.

These two sources then—*Il Pecorone* for the Bond-story and the *Gesta Romanorum* for the Caskets-story—are undoubted. About the others rests some uncertainty. There is

(3) an old play, in which it seems almost certain that both stories had been brought together. It is referred<sup>2</sup> to

*The old play*  
"the Jew." in Stephen Gosson's *Schoole of Abuse* (1579),  
an attack on the drama. He excepts two

plays from his general condemnation of the stage. One of these is "the Jew...representing the greediness of worldly chusers, and bloody mindes of Usurers<sup>3</sup>."

The description justifies the inference that this was a play in which (a) the chief character was a Jew, (b) there was an incident similar to Shylock's suit for the pound of flesh, (c) an incident analogous to the choice of the Caskets. In fact, it is scarcely too much to assume that the piece was

*Probably*  
*combined the*  
*Bond-story*  
*and the Cas-*  
*kets-story.* composed of the two main stories<sup>4</sup>—the Bond-story and the Caskets-story—of *The Merchant of Venice*; nor does it seem unfair to suppose

that a play of which even Gosson could speak favourably was known to Shakespeare and furnished him with some slight hints. In fact, the relation of *The Merchant*

<sup>1</sup> In the translation of the *Gesta Romanorum* they are—  
*gold*: "Whoso chooseth me shall finde that he deserveth"  
(i.e. that which).

*silver*: "Whoso chooseth me shall finde that his nature desireth";

*lead*: "Whoso chooseth me shall finde that God hath disposed to him" (i.e. that which God hath awarded, dispensed, to him).

<sup>2</sup> It has been shown (Furness, p. 322) that there is an allusion to this old play, or at any rate to the Bond-story, in one of Spenser's letters in 1579 to Gabriel Harvey, in which he signs himself thus: "he that is fast bounde vnto the[e] in more obligations than any marchant in Italy to any Jewe there."

<sup>3</sup> Arber's Reprint, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> "The expression *worldly chusers* is so appropriate to the choosers of the caskets, and the *bloody mindes of Usurers* so applicable to the vindictive cruelty of Shylock, that it is very

of *Venice* to "the Jew" was probably much the same as the relation of *King Lear* to the old tragedy of *King Leir* and his *Three Daughters*.

(4) Far more difficult to determine is the relation of *The Merchant of Venice* to an old ballad<sup>1</sup> entitled "A new Song, shewing the crueltie of Ger-  
*The ballad of  
"Gernutus."*  
 nutus<sup>2</sup>, a Jewe, who in lending to a merchant an hundred crownes, would have a pound of his fleshe, because he could not pay him at the time appointed."

There are resemblances between this ballad (of unknown authorship and date) and *The Merchant of Venice* which can scarcely, it seems to me, be explained by the mere fact that the Bond-story is common to each. For instance, in the ballad "the merchant's ships are all at sea"; the Jew calls the bond "a merry jest"; he is careful "to get a sergeant" when the bond falls due; he "whets his knife" in court.

*Likeness  
between the  
ballad and  
the play.*

It certainly looks as if the ballad owed something to the play or *vice versa*. Unfortunately it cannot be decided definitely which is the earlier. It has been argued (a) that if the ballad came later, the author—who clearly implies in the first stanza<sup>3</sup> that he borrowed from some Italian source—would have kept the name Shylock; (b) that he would

*Arguments  
that the bal-  
lad preceded  
the play.*

probable Shakespeare in this play, as in other plays, worked upon some rough model"—*Staunton*. Most editors believe that the play mentioned by Gosson was to some extent, "the rude original" of *The Merchant of Venice*.

<sup>1</sup> Given in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.

<sup>2</sup> The name has been thought to be suggested by, or at least connected with, that of a Jew called *Gerontus*, a character in an old play, *The Three Ladies of London* (1584).

<sup>3</sup> "In Venice towne not long agoe

A cruel Jew did dwell,  
Which lived all on usurie,  
As Italian writers tell."

Halliwell, however, says, "little reliance can be placed upon a statement of this kind in a composition belonging to a class in which deceptive assertions of origin and antiquity are of continual occurrence."

have introduced Portia, or at any rate some learned lady in disguise, instead of having the matter settled by a Judge (a much less effective treatment); that, though the style of the extant text rather points to a date later than 1600, yet the ballad may have been rewritten, as often happened with ballads. The preponderance of opinion is that the ballad did precede the play and was probably present to Shakespeare's thoughts.

(5) There are (as already stated) two or three passages in Shylock's speeches in the Trial-scene which have led, with some reason, to the belief that Shakespeare had seen Silvan's *Orator*.

(6) We must remember Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, written about 1590. Marlowe's<sup>1</sup> relation to Shakespeare and the great popularity of *The Jew of Malta*<sup>2</sup> forbid the doubt that Shakespeare was familiar with this play.

Now the stock-criticism<sup>3</sup> is that Marlowe's Jew Barabas is a "stagey," impossible "monster," but Shylock a very human villain; which is very true. Still, the difference between the two characters does not make it impossible that the one owed *something* to the other; and believing that Shakespeare knew

Marlowe's play, one can scarcely believe that when he came to draw Shylock he was totally uninfluenced by the memory of Marlowe's Christian-hating, money-hoarding Jew. Further, Barabas's daughter Abigail is in love with a Christian, a fact which leads to the estrangement<sup>4</sup> of

Marlowe's play, one can scarcely believe that when he came to draw Shylock he was totally uninfluenced by the memory of Marlowe's Christian-hating, money-hoarding Jew. Further, Barabas's daughter Abigail is in love with a Christian, a fact which leads to the estrangement<sup>4</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> It is generally conceded that he and Shakespeare were in some way associated together in *Henry VI.*, Parts 2 and 3. Marlowe is referred to in *As You Like It*, III. 5. 81, 82, in the famous couplet:

"Dead Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,  
'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?'"

His considerable influence on Shakespeare's earlier style is now universally recognised.

<sup>2</sup> Not to be confused with "the Jew" mentioned by Gosson.

<sup>3</sup> "Shylock, in the midst of his savage purpose, is a man.... Barabas is a mere monster"—*Charles Lamb*.

<sup>4</sup> In the end Barabas poisons her.

father and daughter; and she becomes a Christian. Hence their relation closely resembles that between Jessica (with her Christian lover, for whom she "becomes a Christian," II. 3. 21) and Shylock.

*Relations  
between Shy-  
lock and  
Jessica.*

(7) Lastly, it has been suggested that the Lorenzo-

Jessica story which forms the underplot owes something not only to Marlowe but to an Italian novelist. "The elopement" (says Furness) "of Jessica and her theft of jewels has been construed into a third subsidiary plot, and its origin traced by Dunlop (p. 254) to the Four-

*Supposed,  
but doubtful,  
source of the  
Lorenzo-  
Jessica story  
which forms  
the underplot.*

teenth Tale of Massuccio di Salerno, who flourished about 1470: 'It is the story of a young gentleman of Messina, who becomes enamoured of the daughter of a rich Neapolitan miser. As the father kept his child perpetually shut up, the lover has recourse to stratagem. Pretending to set out on a long journey, he deposits with the miser a number of valuable effects, leaving, among other things, a female slave, who prepossesses the mind of the girl in favour of her master, and finally assists in the elopement of the young lady, and the robbery of her father's jewels, which she carries along with her.... It is not improbable that the avaricious father in this tale, the daughter so carefully shut up, the elopement of the lovers managed by the intervention of a servant, the robbery of the father, and his grief on the discovery, which is represented as divided between the loss of his daughter and ducats, may have suggested the third plot in Shakespeare's drama,—the love and elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo.' No Elizabethan translation of this Italian story is known, and whether Shakespeare ever used the story seems to me very doubtful.

We have exhausted, at last, the list of Shakespeare's possible obligations. What does it all amount to? Just this (to repeat what has been said already): that the originality of *The Merchant of Venice* lies not in the material but in the treatment of the material.

*What Shake-  
speare's  
indebtedness  
really  
amounts to.*

What constitutes the greatness of the play is the inter-

weaving, with an extreme subtlety, of the different threads of story into one harmonious design, the characterisation (ever the crown of Shakespeare's art) which has given us in Portia and Shylock two surpassingly interesting creations, the intensity of dramatic effect and interest, the varied relief, the poetry, the humour: all that "Shakespeare" means—and that you will not find in these "sources"<sup>1</sup>.

*Wherein lies  
the greatness  
of the play.*

## IV

THE COMBINATION OF THE STORIES  
OF THE PLAY

It might seem impossible that the varied elements of *The Merchant of Venice* could be brought into unity. Yet this is what Shakespeare has done. The interaction of the two main stories is such that the one is essential to the other. The great fact of the Bond-story (the chief story) is Antonio's escape from Shylock's revenge. The great fact of the Caskets-story is Bassanio's winning

*Connection  
between the  
Bond-story  
and the  
Caskets-story.*

<sup>1</sup> The pity of it is that one scarce can use the words "source" and "original" without giving a false impression. Cf. the following valuable remarks of Dr Furness, written with reference to *King Lear* but applicable (*mutatis mutandis*) to all Shakespeare's plays of which some "original" has been unearthed.

"What false impressions are conveyed in the phrases which we have to use to express the process whereby Shakespeare converted the stocks and stones of the old dramas and chronicles into living, breathing men and women! We say 'he drew his original' from this source, or he 'found his materials' in that source. But how much did he 'draw,' or what did he 'find'? Granting that he drew from Holinshed, or whence you please, where did he find Lear's madness, or the pudder of the elements, or the inspired babblings of the Fool? Of whatsoever makes his tragedies sublime and heaven-high above all other human compositions,—of that we find never a trace.... When, after reading one of his tragedies, we turn to what we are pleased to call the 'original of his plot,' I am reminded of those glittering gems, of which Heine speaks, that we see at night in lovely

the hand of Portia. Antonio would never have incurred the danger from which Portia's genius rescues him, but for his generosity in furnishing Bassanio<sup>1</sup> with the means to go to Belmont as a suitor for Portia. She is the cause indirectly and involuntarily of Antonio's suffering, and directly of his preservation. In fact, the (minor) Caskets-story is made the means of setting the (major) Bond-story in motion; and at the catastrophe of the latter all hinges on the heroine of the former. Thus the main action of the play is informed by a true sequence of cause and effect.

With this main action the Lorenzo-Jessica *The Under-plot.* story has a close connection<sup>2</sup>.

And the incident of the rings which dispels the tragic, strained impressions of the Trial-scene, and brings us back to the sphere of comedy, or rather of calm and lovers' joy, this too is part and parcel of the main action. For the incident arises out of the Caskets-story (III. 2. 169-174), reaches its "complication" through the Bond-story, the ring being given away as the reward for Antonio's rescue, and then is concluded through the intervention of Antonio (v. 241-246): as he had enabled Portia and Bassanio to come together, so (nominally) he reconciles them. Thus the four stories are as four threads that make up a design; the Bond-story and the Caskets-story being those out of which the fabric is mainly woven.

The meeting-point of all four is the scene of Bassanio's choice of the caskets.

gardens, and think must have been left there by kings' children at play, but when we look for these jewels by day we see only wretched little worms which crawl painfully away, and which the foot forbears to crush only out of strange pity."

<sup>1</sup> Given two stories developing on parallel lines, you generally find some character who passes from the one sphere of events to the other and thus forms a connecting link. Compare Edmund in *King Lear*. Bassanio fulfils this function in *The Merchant of Venice*. Devotion to him is the meeting-point of Antonio (Bond-story) and Portia (Caskets-story).

<sup>2</sup> See II. 3, first note. Observe also that this subsidiary story helps to fill the time between the signing and expiration of the bond.

"This scene," says Mr Moulton, "is the climax of the Caskets Story. It is connected with the catastrophe in the Story of the Jew<sup>1</sup>: Bassanio, at the moment of his happiness, learns [III. 2. 230, 231] that the friend through whom he has been able to contend for the prize [of Portia's hand] has forfeited his life to his foe as the price of his liberality. The scene is connected with the Jessica Story: for Jessica and her husband are the messengers who bring the sad tidings, and thus link together the bright and gloomy elements of the play. Finally, the Episode of the Rings, which is to occupy the end of the drama, has its foundation in this scene, in the exchange<sup>2</sup> of the rings which are to be the source of such ironical perplexity." Hence the scene is well described as the "dramatic centre" of the play.

## V

## THE CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

Criticism of Portia naturally dwells upon the harmonious fulness of her character: she has so many qualities so finely tempered together. Most people of marked individuality have the defect of their qualities: force of character easily becomes hardness; a strong sense of justice is apt on occasion to pass into severity, and, conversely, kindness of heart into undue indulgence. But with Portia's character all is in "the mean." An admirable critic<sup>3</sup> remarks that Portia, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Rosalind in *As You Like It* "may be classed together as characters of intellect, because, when compared with others, they are at once distinguished by their mental superiority." With all her

<sup>1</sup> I.e. the Bond-story.

<sup>2</sup> He implies (whether rightly, I am not sure) that when Portia presents the ring (III. 2. 171-174), Bassanio returns the compliment and gives her one.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs Jameson (*Characteristics of Women*), to whose criticism of Portia, as also to some suggestions of other writers, I am indebted.



mental ability, Portia is free from pedantry. She does not pose at all as one who is intellectually superior to those around her; she has too much modesty, too keen a sense of humour; she keeps the charm of an "unlesson'd girl" (III. 2. 159), without (as it seems to me) any of the self-consciousness and affectation that sometimes accompany cleverness. Again, she unites soundness of judgment with sensibility (cf. III. 2. 1-62), and a buoyant enthusiasm in undertaking what her judgment approves (III. 4. 57-82). She has a strong sense of honour and justice; yet withal a woman's true instinct of kindness and mercy. Thus she "could teach Bassanio how to choose right" (III. 2. 10, 11), and is longing that he may, but will not swerve from the terms imposed by her father. And when Bassanio's choice does fall on the right casket, then, in the midst of her great joy, concern for his honour makes her urge him to hasten to the help of the friend whom he has brought into such trouble. She is all sympathy and consideration, and not in the least jealous of Antonio.

Then in the Trial-scene, though she must see justice done, she would far rather show mercy to Shylock by inducing him to show mercy. She stoops to plead with the implacable Jew, whom everyone else in the court would deal with summarily. Knowing that she has the means to confound him, she puts forth all her eloquence in hope of touching his heart. Failing once, she gives him another chance (IV. 1. 231, 232); failing again, she presses him, for his own sake, to do at least some slight "charity" (IV. 1. 255-259). Not till Shylock has flung away every proffered chance does she pronounce sentence: a harsh sentence, truly, but the law of Venice—and a judge must administer the law without reference to his personal feelings. What Portia says and does in this scene represents, surely, the perfect reconciliation of justice and mercy.

There is a deep seriousness of character in her: you see it at all the great moments of the action—when she gives herself in those words of exquisite self-surrender to Bassanio (III. 2. 149-174), when with swift sympathy she perceives his distress (III. 2. 238-245), above all, when

she reasons with Shylock and sets forth "the quality of mercy" (iv. 1. 182-200). Yet there is no austerity in this seriousness. Rather, it is relieved by a rippling vivacity of mood, a joyous brilliance of manner and speech.

Gifted with a fine sense of humour, she delights in a comic situation such as the ring-episode, where her assumption of anger (v. 189-238) illustrates her versatility. But how quickly she sees when a jest has gone far enough, how tactfully she drops it (v. 246, 247). She has a very pretty wit, which could, at need, be unpleasantly keen, as we feel when she is speaking of her suitors (1. 2): yet she never speaks seriously a single word of caustic satire to anyone.

She has great resourcefulness and self-reliance: the plan of going to Venice to plead is hers, and we can imagine what nerve its execution needs. One might have thought that the girl who possessed the qualities essential to the part that Portia plays must be somewhat self-assertive and even unfeminine; but we do not think so after knowing her. For each quality in her which is the index of force of character and intellect is balanced by some more specifically feminine quality: by the tenderness of a "gentle spirit" (iii. 2. 163) and ardour, by modesty and tact; and the result is an exquisite equipoise. She is greatly Bassanio's superior, as we cannot help feeling; and one of the most beautiful things where so much is beautiful is her determination not to see this superiority—or shall we say her inability, since love (the poets tell us) is ever blind?

Portia, it has been well remarked, represents the fair and gracious influences of life, as Shylock the gloomy. Fortune has indeed showered the choicest gifts upon her: beauty of character and person, the training of a wise and "virtuous" father (1. 2. 25), noble birth and the refined environment of great wealth<sup>1</sup>. Life for her has been very full of sunshine; and the sunshine irradiates her being.

<sup>1</sup> "There is a commanding grace, a high-bred elegance, a spirit of magnificence in all that she says and does, as [in] one to whom splendour had been familiar from her very birth."—*Characteristics of Women*.

There is a tendency in modern criticism as in historical writings to rehabilitate the great "villains" and represent them as much less black than tradition has painted them; and Shylock<sup>1</sup>, whom one's youth was taught to detest, has found apologists who try to make out quite a good case on his behalf. According to this comparatively modern reading of his character and action, he is a man "more sinned against than sinning"; the representative of an oppressed race who prosecutes his implacable suit less from motives of base personal malice and self-interest<sup>2</sup> than from a lofty, impersonal patriotism which animates him to avenge his nation's wrongs in his own; a victim of maltreatment who claims sympathy instead of the execration usually accorded him. There is, of course, an element of truth in this interpretation. It gives an aspect of Shylock which should not be lost sight

<sup>1</sup> The origin of the name is uncertain. Staunton says: "This may have been an Italian name, *Scialocca*, the change of which into *Shylock* was natural. At all events, it was a name current among the Jews, for, at the end of an extremely rare tract, called 'A Jewes Prophesey,' 1607, is a piece entitled: 'Caleb Shilock his prophesie for the yeere 1607.' Although pretending to be a prophecy for the year 1607, this edition was a reprint of a much older copy." There is extant a ballad of the same title and date as this "prophesie."

Hunter, however, writes: "We collect that Shylock was a Levantine Jew from the name: *Scialac*, which is doubtless the same name in a different orthography, being the name of a Maronite of Mount Libanus, who was living in 1614."

It seems more likely that the tract mentioned by Staunton was older than the play and that "Caleb *Shilock*" suggested *Shylock*.

<sup>2</sup> But note Shylock's own statement (I. 3. 39-42) of his feelings towards Antonio:

"I hate him for he is a Christian;  
But *more*, for that in low simplicity  
He lends out money gratis and brings down  
The rate of usance here with us in Venice."

See again III. 1. 41, 42, 47, 48. It has been said that his lust of revenge triumphs over his avarice in the Trial-scene where he refuses Bassanio's offers; yet he may be influenced partly by self-interest. Cf. III. 1. 112-114: "I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will."

of. No doubt, he has suffered greatly at the hands of the Christians, especially of Antonio (I. 3. 95-120), and seen his fellow-countrymen suffer. No doubt, his personal hatred of Antonio is intensified by a religious, patriotic hatred for the Christian adversary who has insulted Shylock's "sacred nation" as well as himself, and represents the passions and prejudices with which it has waged its agelong conflict. And as Shylock stands there before the court—unflinching before his enemies and insistent on his bond—one cannot withhold a grudging tribute of admiration for his indomitable tenacity of purpose and self-reliance.

But when due recognition has been paid to his force of character and devotion to his nation (and perhaps to the memory of his wife, III. 1. 108), and every allowance made for all the wrongs that he and his "tribe" have endured, yet there is surely a solid remainder of evil which justifies the popular detestation of Shylock as a very embodiment of cunning and cruelty, avarice and lovelessness: as the schemer who plots his rival's death under a show of friendship (I. 3. 127, 157), and knows not the words mercy and pity; as the usurer who lives on extortionate "usances" and "forfeitures"; as the father who in the play speaks no word of love to his child, and whose treatment of her is, surely, shown by his words (III. 1. 77-79) that he would gladly see his daughter dead at his feet, so the jewels were in her ear, the ducats in her coffin, and by her words (II. 3. 2) that home<sup>1</sup> for her has meant "hell"; as the seared, loveless being of whom everyone speaks ill, except the "good Tubal" (and even he, for all his "goodness," seems to enjoy torturing his "friend"). Of course, one pities the poor wretch as he staggers from the court with "death" written on his brow (for renunciation<sup>2</sup> of his faith must be

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, she does not even call it "home." What seems to make her conduct reflect upon Shylock is the fact that "among no people are the ties of domestic life held more sacred than among the Hebrews"—*Campbell*. The home therefore of the Jewess must indeed have been a "hell" to her, ere she would have acted as she does, even robbing her father.

<sup>2</sup> It has been described well as "mental and moral annihilation."

as death to him): *sunt lacrimæ rerum*, and the sight of suffering, deserved or undeserved, will touch the heart of man to the end of things. But pity is not quite the same as sympathy, and one can but feel that the rough-handed justice of life has meted to Shylock his own measure to others. The opposite feeling, surely, would be inconsistent with the general tenour of the play, since it would prejudice us against Portia, through whom Shylock's defeat comes.

The play has been called "a plea for toleration." So it is—not because we are meant to sympathise with Shylock in the sense of taking his part and regarding him as an ill-used victim, but because the piece holds the mirror up to truth and shows the results of intolerance: what persecution does: how it debases national character, intensifying its evil qualities and turning even its good into evil. The true way, Shakespeare's way (I am convinced), of regarding Shylock's character is that of the following criticism.

"The Christian who looks frankly and faithfully at this work will not find matter for exultation or for ridicule, but only for shame and sadness. Shylock had been made the hard, savage, relentless creature we see him by long and cruel oppression. He inherited a nature embittered by centuries of insult and outrage, and his own wretched experience had only aggravated its bitterness. 'Sufferance' had been, and was, the badge of all his tribe; it was his badge. As fetters corrode the flesh, so persecution corrodes the heart. Shakespeare, truly detesting this dreadful being, yet bethinks him, we say, how he became so. He was once a man,—at least, his breed was once human; and Shakespeare recognized in the Jew splendid capacities and powers, however, so far as he knew the race, misapplied and debased<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Professor Hales, quoted by Furness. Others also say:

"Shakespeare...draws so philosophical a picture of the energetic Jewish character, that he traces the blame of its faults to the iniquity of the Christian world."

The play "indirectly inculcates the un-wisdom of religious persecution in the mischief it works upon the persecutors as well as upon the persecuted."

As everyone in the play speaks ill of Shylock, so everyone save Shylock speaks well of "the Merchant of Venice<sup>1</sup>," Antonio:

"the kindest man,  
The best-condition'd and unwearied spirit  
In doing courtesies; and one in whom  
The ancient Roman honour more appears  
Than any that draws breath in Italy."

This praise (III. 2. 287-291) may seem partial, the speaker being Bassanio. Yet it is echoed by the others. "The good Antonio," says Salanio (III. 1. 12). "How true a gentleman," says Lorenzo (III. 4. 6). The garrulous Gratiano falls into a more sober tone than is his wont, and an affectionate too, when he addresses Antonio—"I love thee, and it is my love that speaks" (I. 1. 87). The Duke takes "great pains" on his behalf (IV. 1. 7); the chief men in Venice plead (III. 2. 274-276) for the "royal merchant"; the very gaoler grants him an unusual privilege (III. 3). To every class alike he is an object of admiration and affection; and naturally. For Antonio indeed is all kindness (except toward Shylock), and generosity, and thoughtfulness<sup>2</sup> for others; and in the hour of his terrible ordeal, all patience. As regards Shylock, one could wish Antonio's treatment of him different; still, it must be judged by the standard of his time<sup>3</sup>. Feeling in all matters of religious

<sup>1</sup> The play is called after him because, though not himself the chief actor, he is the source and centre of the action. The battle of the Bond-story is fought round him, and it is his generosity that starts the Caskets-story. Cf. the title of *Julius Caesar*, where the chief actor is Brutus, and Caesar himself only appears in three scenes. Yet Caesar is the inner, inspiring cause of the whole, hence the title. The appropriateness of the names of Shakespeare's plays forms an interesting branch of Shakespearian study.

<sup>2</sup> As a striking instance, note his solicitude (just when he has barely passed through such a crisis) for Lorenzo and Jessica (IV. 1. 380-388).

<sup>3</sup> Shylock's conversion must be judged similarly. It was the general mediæval belief that the Jews were "eternally lost," and enforced conversion to Christianity was therefore regarded as a mercy by means of which they were saved from perdition. The idea, says a critic, led inevitably to fanatical persecution.

difference, especially feeling towards non-Christians, was such<sup>1</sup> as an age of tolerance finds hard to understand; while usury<sup>2</sup>, we must remember, was then accounted an odious offence.

Antonio's one fault—a negative fault, yet a fault—which somewhat mars, especially on the stage, the attractiveness of his character, is his lack of self-assertion. He is surely too passive. In his unwillingness to spoil Bassanio's chances at Belmont or cloud his happiness, Antonio keeps silence till it is too late for Bassanio to do anything. Now conceive the agony which the results of such self-sacrifice meant for the man in whose supposed interest it was exercised. Truth is (I think) that through Antonio's generous, elevated nature there runs just a strain of that morbid sentiment (cf. his "sadness") which makes a man carry self-denial too far. But a character of this type is exquisitely adapted to the exigencies of the plot—nay, essential. For the plot requires two improbable things: that some one should sign<sup>3</sup> the bond, and afterwards, seeing the terrible danger draw near, should forbear to ask aid of the friend who could at any rate have made *some* effort to meet the danger. The only man in the play—nay in Venice—who would do both things is Antonio, in whom friendship has become almost a passion, and self-renunciation a second nature. It has often been remarked that the whole story of *King Lear* hinges on the utterly irrational and (*per se*) improbable act of the king in the first scene, but that his peculiar character makes the act credible and so rationalises the story. The character of the utterly unselfish Antonio is equally indispensable to *The Merchant of Venice*. —

<sup>1</sup> We feel in reading *The Merchant of Venice* that the supposed period is Shakespeare's own time. One allusion helps to indicate the period, viz. the mention (II. i. 26) of Sultan Solymán (1490-1566).

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 175-177.

<sup>3</sup> True, Antonio when he did so had good reason to believe that he could discharge the debt. Still, a prudent man would not have risked such a penalty, as Bassanio felt (I. 3. 143).

Bassanio makes the least favourable impression at the outset. He has run into "great debts" (of which, however, he is anxious "to come fairly off"), borrowed money of his friend and now proposes to borrow<sup>1</sup> more, and frankly says that his plan for getting clear of his difficulties is to marry "a lady richly left." The start is not very promising. Yet, even so, his ingenuousness and rapturous description of Portia proclaim him other than the mere fortune-hunter; and once he has arrived at Belmont, his bearing is so noble and lover-like that he makes you quite forget, and feel that in Portia's presence he too has forgotten, the not very worthy motive that, in part at least, took him thither. He shows himself the high-born soldier and lover, careless of outward displays and contemptuous of sham, ready to "hazard all" for love, and in the moment of success modest with a grace of humility that equals Portia's own. Like Shakespeare's own ideal king, he has left behind the extravagant "courses of his youth<sup>2</sup>," and will, we know, prove worthy of Portia's love and Antonio's friendship<sup>3</sup>—sufficient testimonies, assuredly, to any man's deserts.

His friend Gratiano is one of the permanent and familiar social types. We can scarce hope to meet a Portia or an Antonio; but Gratiano is the genial, humorous being without whom no company is complete. His mission in life is to be in cheerful, sometimes rather boisterous spirits, and amuse; and he plays his part excellently. To cleverness he lays no claim, and there is, like enough, a large amount of "nothing" in the "infinite deal" (I. I. 114) he talks. Nevertheless, he hits off shrewd pieces of sense, for which the more solemn

<sup>1</sup> Note, however, that he would rather continue "in his necessity" (I. 3. 144) than that Antonio should run the risk of the bond.

<sup>2</sup> *Henry V.* I. I. 24.

<sup>3</sup> It may seem inconsiderate in him not to give, after he has come to Belmont, more thought to the friend who has incurred such a risk on his behalf; but Antonio had assured him positively that his ships would "come home a month before the day" (I. 3. 170).



friends to whom he is a diverting contrast hardly give him sufficient credit. He has seen (one fancies) something of the world, but is too good-hearted to have been made by experience the least bit a cynic: witness his sympathy with Antonio. He can suit himself, as he says (II. 2. 176-183), and as we see from his restrained bearing before Portia, to his surroundings and tactfully "allay his skipping spirit" (II. 2. 173). He is well matched with Nerissa<sup>1</sup>, his equal in fluency, and something more than his equal in smart wit.

She, we must remember, is not a waiting-maid in the modern sense, but a confidential companion, *Nerissa*, herself of good birth (and therefore a suitable wife socially for Gratiano), such as a great lady in Portia's lonely position would naturally have in attendance. One likes Nerissa, apart from her own pleasing qualities, for her devotion to Portia, whom she will not leave if Bassanio's choice falls out amiss. She resembles Portia in a sense of humour and enjoyment of a comic situation, enters into her plans with zest and 'backs her up' cleverly. As befits "the maid," she pays her "mistress" the compliment of imitation of her manners and tone. Indeed, the faithful way in which Nerissa and Gratiano follow the lead of their superiors is one of the features of the comic side of the play.

In contrast to them, and still more to Portia and Bassanio, is the romantic boy-and-girl pair of lovers, Lorenzo and Jessica<sup>2</sup>. They remind us of Romeo and Juliet, and Jessica is like Juliet in being the stronger force that "directs" (II. 4. 29). As there is little scope for them in the action, each character (but more particularly Lorenzo)

<sup>1</sup> "*Nerissa* is simply the Italian *Nericcia* (from *nero*), and signifies 'the black-haired'—so that she is a contrast to Portia; compare I. I. 169, 170.

<sup>2</sup> Furness quotes the note: "To all appearance this [name] is borrowed from *Genesis*, xi. 29, where *Iscah* of King James's translation appears in earlier editions of the Bible, in 1549 and 1551, as *Jesca*. In the Hebrew it is *Jiscah*, signifying a spy, or looker-out."

is drawn slightly, though very suggestively. The chief impressions that Jessica leaves are of beauty, impulsiveness and (one must add) lack of scruple. She has but a dim sense of the natural ties and obligations. Thus she knows that the severance from Shylock is to be absolute, and apparently accepts it without compunction (II. 5. 56, 57):

"Farewell; and if my fortune be not crost,  
I have a father, you a daughter, lost."

Fortune has been too much against her, making her motherless and worse off than fatherless, neither Jew nor Gentile, but merely (to borrow Launcelot's happy phrase) a "most beautiful pagan" (II. 3. 10, 11). Still, one must wish that she had not taken the jewels and the ducats, which she squanders, be it noted, with that spendthrift recklessness which is so often the nemesis of money-hoarding. Utterly unlike<sup>1</sup> Shylock in most respects, especially in her want of the least touch of national sentiment, she proves herself her "father's child" (II. 3. 17) in the secrecy and self-reliance with which she plans the elopement, hides her feelings in his presence, and carries out the scheme. On occasion she shows a very pretty bashfulness (II. 6. 34-44), and keeps modestly in the background on their arrival at Belmont (III. 2. 232). Her words (v. 69) on the effect of music indicate an Oriental dreaminess of nature; but, childlike, she has never thought of trying to analyse the feeling. There is also in her a vein of fancy and poetry—cf. the "lyrical" opening of the last Act—which will be a source of sympathy with her yet more imaginative and poetical husband. One of the things that we like best in Jessica is her genuine admiration of Portia (III. 5. 49-59). It augurs the development of her own character, stunted hitherto by adverse influences and still childlike in some features, into something ampler and more responsible.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for instance her words in II. 3. 18, 19. I suppose that the Jew in *Ivanhoe*, Isaac of York, and his daughter (though Rebecca is no Jessica) represent in some degree the influence of Shakespeare's play.

Lorenzo is of finer stuff; full of poetry—is there anything in the play more poetical than his speech (v. 54-65) “how sweet the moonlight” etc.?—*Lorenzo*. imagination and sentiment (v. 70-88); not very practical, if one may judge by the description (III. 1) of the lovers’ extravagance at Genoa, and perhaps rather easily led (II. 4. 29, 30). Lorenzo is the true lover, idealizing Jessica (II. 6. 53-57), and recking nothing of Shylock’s displeasure, which will make her dowerless. He illustrates (I think) more than anyone else in the piece the traditional conception of Italian passion of character. Feeling strongly, he is inclined to reticence. Portia, one may be sure, is a judge of character, and she soon admits Lorenzo to intimacy, nay, trust (III. 4. 24-26) and confidence (v. 119-123).

Launcelot<sup>1</sup> is the Gratiano of the lower social sphere. The useful part he plays is made up of small things. With his garrulous quaintness he gives some relief to the serious interest, and that is his chief function. But he also helps to associate the two main stories by exchanging Shylock’s service for Bassanio’s. He enables us to know something more of Shylock in his home and of the conditions amid which Jessica has grown up. And he furthers the Lorenzo-Jessica story by acting as the lovers’ messenger. In each of these little ways Launcelot’s part is helpful to the play. *Launcelot*.

His character speaks for itself. He is a very merry, amusing, affectionate fellow; evidently a good son (II. 2. 59, 60), though with modesty he disclaims the credit jestingly; most good-humoured, perhaps partly because so pleased with himself; and quite boyish in his ways and wit. His wit indeed, on which he evidently plumes himself, has scarcely emerged from the elementary stage of practical jokes (II. 2. 74, 75, note) and clumsy puns (III. 5. 25-40); but he has a keen natural sense of fun<sup>2</sup>. He has picked up from his various masters fine words which he

<sup>1</sup> His surname Gobbo (= ‘hump-backed’) is said to be not uncommon in Italy. It was “the name of an ancient stone in the market-place” of Venice (Raleigh).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. especially his conversations with Jessica (II. 3, III. 5—particularly the latter).

mispronounces and misapplies, and tricks his talk out in odd shreds and patches of learning and Latin (II. 2. 51, 56, 57), to impress simple people. An original stage-direction (II. 2) describes Launcelot as "the Clown," and the description indicates his main part as a "funny fellow<sup>1</sup>." But it would be absurd to compare him with the Clowns of Shakespeare's later comedies. The intellectual wit and verbal *finesse* of Touchstone (*As You Like It*) and Feste (*Twelfth Night*); the former's varied experiences of the world; the latter's sentiment and versatility which enable him to suit himself to every society: these are not the qualities to look for in the humbler, yet shrewd and excellent Launcelot whom everyone likes—even Shylock.

## VI

## THE STORY OF THE PLAY

The following is the story of the play in Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. The young student (for whose benefit primarily it is inserted) should note that the *Tale* deals mainly with the Bond-story and omits the Casket-scenes. The *Tale* retains much of the language of the play, and a good many of the words in it are explained in the Notes. See the Index for them.

\* SHYLOCK, the Jew, lived at Venice: he was an usurer, who had amassed an immense fortune by lending money at great interest to Christian merchants. Shylock, being a hard-hearted man, exacted the payment of the money he

<sup>1</sup> The character would be played by the "jester" of the theatrical company. These "low comedy" parts were in great vogue; and "the jesters were, without doubt, the bright particular stars of the companies to which they belonged, the most popular of the actors, and the best remunerated" (Raleigh). The two most famous jesters of the Elizabethan stage were Tarleton (the Yorick, probably, of *Hamlet*, v. 1) and Will Kemp, who played all the chief comic parts in Shakespeare's plays (e.g. Dogberry in *Much Ado*) up to 1603, when he left the Globe Theatre and joined a rival company for a time; eventually he returned. Quibbling on words (III. 5. 25-40) was a stock-feature of the part of these jesters.

lent with such severity that he was much disliked by all good men, and particularly by Antonio, a young merchant of Venice; and Shylock as much hated Antonio, because he used to lend money to people in distress, and would never take any interest for the money he lent; therefore there was great enmity between this covetous Jew and the generous merchant Antonio. Whenever Antonio met Shylock on the Rialto (or Exchange), he used to reproach him with his usuries and hard dealings, which the Jew would bear with seeming patience, while he secretly meditated revenge.

Antonio was the kindest man that lived, the best conditioned, and had the most unwearied spirit in doing courtesies; indeed, he was one in whom the ancient Roman honour more appeared than in any that drew breath in Italy. He was greatly beloved by all his fellow-citizens; but the friend who was nearest and dearest to his heart was Bassanio, a noble Venetian, who, having but a small patrimony, had nearly exhausted his little fortune by living in too expensive a manner for his slender means, as young men of high rank with small fortunes are too apt to do. Whenever Bassanio wanted money, Antonio assisted him; and it seemed as if they had but one heart and one purse between them.

One day Bassanio came to Antonio, and told him that he wished to repair his fortunes by a wealthy marriage with a lady whom he dearly loved, whose father, that was lately dead, had left her sole heiress to a large estate; and that in her father's lifetime he used to visit at her house, when he thought he had observed this lady had sometimes from her eyes sent speechless messages, that seemed to say he would be no unwelcome suitor; but not having money to furnish himself with an appearance befitting the lover of so rich an heiress, he besought Antonio to add to the many favours he had shown him, by lending him three thousand ducats.

Antonio had no money by him at that time to lend his friend; but expecting soon to have some ships come home laden with merchandise, he said he would go and borrow the money upon the credit of those ships.

Antonio and Bassanio<sup>1</sup> went together to Shylock, and Antonio asked the Jew to lend him three thousand ducats upon any interest he should require, to be paid out of the merchandise contained in his ships at sea. On this, Shylock thought within himself, "If I can once catch him on the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him; he hates our Jewish nation; he lends out money gratis, and among the merchants he rails at me and my well-earned bargains, which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe if I forgive him!" Antonio finding he was musing within himself and did not answer, and being impatient for the money, said, "Shylock, do you hear? will you lend the money?" To this question the Jew replied, "Signior Antonio, on the Rialto many a time and often you have railed at me about my monies and my usuries, and I have borne it with a patient shrug, for sufferance is the badge of all our tribe; and then you have called me unbeliever, cut-throat dog, and spit upon my Jewish garments, and spurned at me with your foot, as if I was a cur. Well then, it now appears you need my help; and you come to me, and say, *Shylock, lend me monies*. Has a dog money? Is it possible a cur should lend three thousand ducats? Shall I bend low and say, Fair sir, you spit upon me on Wednesday last, another time you called me dog, and for these courtesies I am to lend you monies." Antonio replied, "I am as like to call you so again, to spit on you again, and spurn you too. If you will lend me this money, lend it not to me as to a friend, but rather lend it to me as to an enemy, that, if I break, you may with better face exact the penalty."—"Why, look you," said Shylock, "how you storm! I would be friends with you, and have your love. I will forget the shames you have put upon me. I will supply your wants, and take no interest for my money." This seemingly kind offer greatly surprised Antonio; and then Shylock, still pretending kindness, and that all he did was to gain Antonio's love, again said he would lend him the three thousand ducats, and take no interest for his money; only Antonio should go with him to a lawyer, and there sign in

<sup>1</sup> Bassanio goes first (I. 3. 1-36).

merry sport a bond, that if he did not repay the money by a certain day, he would forfeit a pound of flesh, to be cut from any part of his body that Shylock pleased.

"Content," said Antonio: "I will sign to this bond, and say there is much kindness in the Jew."

Bassanio said Antonio should not sign to such a bond for him; but still Antonio insisted that he would sign it, for that before the day of payment came, his ships would return laden with many times the value of the money.

Shylock, hearing this debate, exclaimed, "O, father Abraham, what suspicious people these Christians are! Their own hard dealings teach them to suspect the thoughts of others. I pray you tell me this, Bassanio: if he should break his day, what should I gain by the exaction of the forfeiture? A pound of man's flesh, taken from a man, is not so estimable, nor profitable neither, as the flesh of mutton or beef. I say, to buy his favour I offer this friendship: if he will take it, so; if not, adieu."

At last against the advice of Bassanio, who, notwithstanding all the Jew had said of his kind intentions, did not like his friend should run the hazard of this shocking penalty for his sake, Antonio signed the bond, thinking it really was (as the Jew said) merely in sport.

The rich heiress that Bassanio wished to marry lived near Venice, at a place called Belmont: her name was Portia, and in the graces of her person and her mind she was nothing inferior to that Portia, of whom we read, who was Cato's daughter, and the wife of Brutus.

Bassanio, being so kindly supplied with money by his friend Antonio, at the hazard of his life, set out for Belmont with a splendid train, and attended by a gentleman of the name of Gratiano.

Bassanio proving successful in his suit, Portia in a short time consented to accept of him for a husband.

Bassanio confessed to Portia that he had no fortune, and that his high birth and noble ancestry was all that he could boast of; she, who loved him for his worthy qualities, and had riches enough not to regard wealth in a husband, answered with a graceful modesty, that she would wish herself a thousand times more fair, and ten thousand

times more rich, to be more worthy of him; and then the accomplished Portia prettily dispraised herself, and said she was an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised, yet not so old but that she could learn, and that she would commit her gentle spirit to be directed and governed by him in all things; and she said, "Myself and what is mine to you and yours is now converted. But yesterday, Bassanio, I was the lady of this fair mansion, queen of myself, and mistress over these servants; and now this house, these servants, and myself, are yours, my lord; I give them with this ring"; presenting a ring to Bassanio.

Bassanio was so overpowered with gratitude and wonder at the gracious manner in which the rich and noble Portia accepted of a man of his humble fortunes, that he could not express his joy and reverence to the dear lady who so honoured him, by anything but broken words of love and thankfulness; and taking the ring, he vowed never to part with it.

Gratiano and Nerissa, Portia's waiting-maid, were in attendance upon their lord and lady, when Portia so gracefully promised to become the obedient wife of Bassanio; and Gratiano, wishing Bassanio and the generous lady joy, desired permission to be married at the same time.

"With all my heart, Gratiano," said Bassanio, "if you can get a wife."

Gratiano then said that he loved the lady Portia's fair waiting gentlewoman Nerissa, and that she had promised to be his wife, if her lady married Bassanio. Portia asked Nerissa if this was true. Nerissa replied, "Madam, it is so, if you approve of it." Portia willingly consenting, Bassanio pleasantly said, "Then our wedding-feast shall be much honoured by your marriage, Gratiano."

The happiness of these lovers was sadly crossed at this moment by the entrance of a messenger, who brought a letter from Antonio containing fearful tidings. When Bassanio read Antonio's letter, Portia feared it was to tell him of the death of some dear friend, he looked so pale; and inquiring what was the news which had so distressed him, he said, "O sweet Portia, here are a few of the unpleasantest words that ever blotted paper: gentle lady,



when I first imparted my love to you, I freely told you all the wealth I had ran in my veins; but I should have told you that I had less than nothing, being in debt." Bassanio then told Portia what has been here related, of his borrowing the money of Antonio, and of Antonio's procuring it of Shylock the Jew, and of the bond by which Antonio had engaged to forfeit a pound of flesh, if it was not repaid by a certain day: and then Bassanio read Antonio's letter; the words of which were, "*Sweet Bassanio, my ships are all lost, my bond to the Jew is forfeited, and since in paying it is impossible I should live, I could wish to see you at my death; notwithstanding, use your pleasure; if your love for me do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.*" "O, my dear love," said Portia, "dispatch all business, and begone; you shall have gold to pay the money twenty times over, before this kind friend shall lose a hair by my Bassanio's fault: and as you are so dearly bought, I will dearly love you." Portia then said she would be married to Bassanio before he set out, to give him a legal right to her money; and that same day they were married, and Gratiano was also married to Nerissa; and Bassanio and Gratiano, the instant they were married, set out in great haste for Venice, where Bassanio found Antonio in prison.

The day of payment being past, the cruel Jew would not accept of the money which Bassanio offered him, but insisted upon having a pound of Antonio's flesh. A day was appointed to try this shocking cause before the Duke of Venice, and Bassanio awaited in dreadful suspense the event of the trial.

When Portia parted with her husband, she spoke cheeringly to him, and bade him bring his dear friend along with him when he returned; yet she feared it would go hard with Antonio, and when she was left alone she began to think and consider within herself, if she could by any means be instrumental in saving the life of her dear Bassanio's friend; and notwithstanding when she wished to honour her Bassanio, she had said to him with such a meek and wife-like grace, that she would submit in all things to be governed by his superior wisdom, yet being now called forth into action by the peril of her honoured

husband's friend, she did nothing doubt her own powers, and by the sole guidance of her own true and perfect judgment, at once resolved to go herself to Venice, and speak in Antonio's defence.

Portia had a relation who was a counsellor in the law; to this gentleman, whose name was Bellario, she wrote, and stating the case to him, desired his opinion, and that with his advice he would also send her the dress worn by a counsellor. When the messenger returned, he brought letters from Bellario of advice how to proceed, and also everything necessary for her equipment.

Portia dressed herself and her maid Nerissa in men's apparel, and putting on the robes of a counsellor, she took Nerissa along with her as her clerk; and setting out immediately, they arrived at Venice on the very day of the trial. The cause was just going<sup>1</sup> to be heard before the duke and senators of Venice in the senate-house, when Portia entered this high court of justice, and presented a letter from Bellario, in which that learned counsellor wrote to the duke, saying, he would have come himself to plead for Antonio, but that he was prevented by sickness, and he requested that the learned young doctor Balthasar (so he called Portia) might be permitted to plead in his stead. This the duke granted, much wondering at the youthful appearance of the stranger, who was prettily disguised by her counsellor's robes and her large wig.

And now began this important trial. Portia looked around her, and she saw the merciless Jew; and she saw Bassanio, but he knew her not in her disguise. He was standing beside Antonio, in an agony of distress and fear for his friend.

The importance of the arduous task Portia had engaged in gave this tender lady courage, and she boldly proceeded in the duty she had undertaken to perform: and first of all she addressed herself to Shylock; and allowing that he had a right by the Venetian law to have the forfeit ex-

<sup>1</sup> Strictly, she comes into court a little while after the case has begun; see iv. i. 166. The *Tale* does not profess to follow the play with *minute* accuracy; but it gives a most vivid and true sketch of the story.

pressed in the bond, she spoke so sweetly of the noble quality of *mercy*, as would have softened any heart but the unfeeling Shylock's; saying, that it dropped as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath; and how mercy was a double blessing, it blessed him that gave, and him that received it; and how it became monarchs better than their crowns, being an attribute of God himself; and that earthly power came nearest to God's, in proportion as mercy tempered justice; and she bid Shylock remember that as we all pray for mercy, that same prayer should teach us to show mercy. Shylock only answered her by desiring to have the penalty forfeited in the bond. "Is he not able to pay the money?" asked Portia. Bassanio then offered the Jew the payment of the three thousand ducats as many times over as he should desire; which Shylock refusing, and still insisting upon having a pound of Antonio's flesh, Bassanio begged the learned young counsellor would endeavour to wrest the law a little, to save Antonio's life. But Portia gravely answered, that laws once established must never be altered. Shylock hearing Portia say that the law might not be altered, it seemed to him that she was pleading in his favour, and he said, "A Daniel is come to judgment! O wise young judge, how I do honour you! How much elder are you than your looks?"

Portia now desired Shylock to let her look at the bond; and when she had read it, she said, "This bond is forfeited, and by this the Jew may lawfully claim a pound of flesh, to be by him cut off nearest Antonio's heart." Then she said to Shylock, "Be merciful: take the money, and bid me tear the bond." But no mercy would the cruel Shylock show; and he said, "By my soul I swear, there is no power in the tongue of man to alter me."—"Why then, Antonio," said Portia, "you must prepare your bosom for the knife:" and while Shylock was sharpening a long knife with great eagerness to cut off the pound of flesh, Portia said to Antonio, "Have you anything to say?" Antonio with a calm resignation replied, that he had but little to say, for that he had prepared his mind for death. Then he said to Bassanio, "Give me your hand, Bassanio! Fare you well! Grieve not that I am fallen into this misfortune

for you. Commend me to your honourable wife, and tell her how I have loved you!" Bassanio in the deepest affliction replied, "Antonio, I am married to a wife, who is as dear to me as life itself, but life itself, my wife, and all the world, are not esteemed with me above your life: I would lose all, I would sacrifice all to this devil here, to deliver you."

Portia hearing this, though the kind-hearted lady was not at all offended with her husband for expressing the love he owed to so true a friend as Antonio in these strong terms, yet could not help answering, "Your wife would give you little thanks, if she were present, to hear you make this offer." And then Gratiano, who loved to copy what his lord did, thought he must make a speech like Bassanio's, and he said, in Nerissa's hearing, who was writing in her clerk's dress by the side of Portia, "I have a wife, whom I protest I love; I wish she were in heaven, if she could but entreat some power there to change the temper of this curriish Jew." "It is well you wish this behind her back, else you would have but an unquiet house," said Nerissa.

Shylock now cried out impatiently, "We trifle time; I pray pronounce the sentence." And now all was awful expectation in the court, and every heart was full of grief for Antonio.

Portia asked if the scales were ready to weigh the flesh; and she said to the Jew, "Shylock, you must have some surgeon by, lest he bleed to death." Shylock, whose whole intent was that Antonio should bleed to death, said, "It is not so named in the bond." Portia replied, "It is not so named in the bond, but what of that? It were good you did so much for charity." To this all the answer Shylock would make was, "I cannot find it; it is not in the bond." "Then," said Portia, "a pound of Antonio's flesh is thine. The law allows it, and the court awards it. And you may cut this flesh from off his breast. The law allows it, and the court awards it." Again Shylock exclaimed, "O wise and upright judge! A Daniel is come to judgment!" And then he sharpened his long knife again, and looking eagerly on Antonio, he said, "Come, prepare!"

"Tarry a little, Jew," said Portia; "there is something else. This bond here gives you no drop of blood; the words expressly are, 'a pound of flesh.' If in cutting off the pound of flesh you shed one drop of Christian blood, your lands and goods are by the law to be confiscated to the state of Venice." Now as it was utterly impossible for Shylock to cut off the pound of flesh without shedding some of Antonio's blood, this wise discovery of Portia's, that it was flesh and not blood that was named in the bond, saved the life of Antonio; and all admiring the wonderful sagacity of the young counsellor, who had so happily thought of this expedient, *plaudits* resounded from every part of the senate-house; and Gratiano exclaimed, in the words which Shylock had used, "O wise and upright judge! mark, Jew, a Daniel is come to judgment!"

Shylock finding himself defeated in his cruel intent, said with a disappointed look, that he would take the money; and Bassanio, rejoiced beyond measure at Antonio's unexpected deliverance, cried out, "Here is the money!" But Portia stopped him, saying, "Softly; there is no haste; the Jew shall have nothing but the penalty: therefore prepare, Shylock, to cut off the flesh; but mind you shed no blood: nor do not cut off more nor less than just a pound; be it more or less by one poor scruple, nay, if the scale turn but the weight of a single hair, you are condemned by the laws of Venice to die, and all your wealth is forfeited to the senate." "Give me my money, and let me go," said Shylock. "I have it ready," said Bassanio: "here it is."

Shylock was going to take the money, when Portia again stopped him, saying, "Tarry, Jew; I have yet another hold upon you. By the laws of Venice, your wealth is forfeited to the state, for having conspired against the life of one of its citizens, and your life lies at the mercy of the duke; therefore down on your knees, and ask him to pardon you."

The duke then said to Shylock, "That you may see the difference of our Christian spirit, I pardon you your life before you ask it; half your wealth belongs to Antonio, the other half comes to the state."

The generous Antonio then said that he would give up his share of Shylock's wealth, if Shylock would sign a deed to make it over at his death to his daughter and her husband; for Antonio knew that the Jew had an only daughter who had lately married against his consent to a young Christian, named Lorenzo, a friend of Antonio's, which had so offended Shylock, that he had disinherited her.

The Jew agreed to this: and being thus disappointed in his revenge, and despoiled of his riches, he said, "I am ill. Let me go home; send the deed after me, and I will sign over half my riches to my daughter."—"Get thee gone, then," said the duke, "and sign it; and if you repent your cruelty and turn Christian, the state will forgive you the fine of the other half of your riches."

The duke now released Antonio, and dismissed the court. He then highly praised the wisdom and ingenuity of the young counsellor, and invited him home to dinner. Portia, who meant to return to Belmont before her husband, replied, "I humbly thank your grace, but I must away directly." The duke said he was sorry he had not leisure to stay and dine with him; and turning to Antonio, he added, "Reward this gentleman; for in my mind you are much indebted to him."

The duke and his senators left the court; and then Bassanio said to Portia, "Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend Antonio have by your wisdom been this day acquitted of grievous penalties, and I beg you will accept of the three thousand ducats due unto the Jew." "And we shall stand indebted to you over and above," said Antonio, "in love and service evermore."

Portia could not be prevailed upon to accept the money; but upon Bassanio still pressing her to accept of some reward, she said, "Give me your<sup>1</sup> gloves; I will wear them for your sake;" and then Bassanio taking off his gloves, she espied the ring which she had given him upon his finger: now it was the ring the wily lady wanted to get

<sup>1</sup> It seems more likely that Portia asks Antonio for *his* gloves and then turns to Bassanio for the ring; see IV. I. 424, 425.

from him to make a merry jest when she saw her Bassanio again, that made her ask him for his gloves; and she said, when she saw the ring, "and for your love I will take this ring from you." Bassanio was sadly distressed that the counsellor should ask him for the only thing he could not part with, and he replied in great confusion, that he could not give him that ring, because it was his wife's gift, and he had vowed never to part with it; but that he would give him the most valuable ring in Venice, and find it out by proclamation. On this Portia affected to be affronted, and left the court, saying, "You teach me, sir, how a beggar should be answered."

"Dear Bassanio," said Antonio, "let him have the ring; let my love and the great service he has done for me be valued against your wife's displeasure." Bassanio, ashamed to appear so ungrateful, yielded, and sent Gratiano after Portia with the ring; and then the *clerk* Nerissa, who had also given Gratiano a ring, she begged his ring, and Gratiano (not choosing to be outdone in generosity by his lord) gave it to her. And there was laughing among these ladies to think, when they got home, how they would tax their husbands with giving away their rings, and swear that they had given them as a present to some woman.

Portia, when she returned, was in that happy temper of mind which never fails to attend the consciousness of having performed a good action; her cheerful spirits enjoyed everything she saw: the moon never seemed to shine so bright before; and when that pleasant moon was hid behind a cloud, then a light which she saw from her house at Belmont as well pleased her charmed fancy, and she said to Nerissa, "That light we see is burning in my hall; how far that little candle throws its beams, so shines a good deed in a naughty world"; and hearing the sound of music from her house, she said, "Methinks that music soundeth much sweeter than by day."

And now Portia and Nerissa entered the house, and dressing themselves in their own apparel, they awaited the arrival of their husbands, who soon followed them with Antonio; and Bassanio presenting his dear friend to the lady Portia, the congratulations and welcomings of that

lady were hardly over, when they perceived Nerissa and her husband quarrelling in a corner of the room. "A quarrel already?" said Portia. "What is the matter?" Gratiano replied, "Lady, it is about a paltry gilt ring that Nerissa gave me, with words upon it like the poetry on a cutler's knife: *Love me, and leave me not.*"

"What does the poetry or the value of the ring signify?" said Nerissa. "You swore to me when I gave it to you, that you would keep it till the hour of death; and now you say you gave it to the lawyer's clerk. I know you gave it to a woman."—"By this hand," replied Gratiano, "I gave it to a youth, a kind of boy, a little scrubbed boy, no higher than yourself; he was clerk to the young counsellor that by his wise pleading saved Antonio's life: this prating boy begged it for a fee, and I could not for my life deny him." Portia said, "You were to blame, Gratiano, to part with your wife's first gift. I gave my lord Bassanio a ring, and I am sure he would not part with it for all the world." Gratiano, in excuse for his fault, now said, "My lord Bassanio gave his ring away to the counsellor, and then the boy, his clerk, that took some pains in writing, he begged my ring."

Portia, hearing this, seemed very angry, and reproached Bassanio for giving away her ring; and she said, Nerissa had taught her what to believe, and that she knew some woman had the ring. Bassanio was very unhappy to have so offended his dear lady, and he said with great earnestness, "No, by my honour, no woman had it, but a civil doctor, who refused three thousand ducats of me, and begged the ring, which when I denied him, he went displeased away. What could I do, sweet Portia? I was so beset with shame for my seeming ingratitude, that I was forced to send the ring after him. Pardon me, good lady; had you been there, I think you would have begged the ring of me to give the worthy doctor."

"Ah!" said Antonio, "I am the unhappy cause of these quarrels."

Portia bid Antonio not to grieve at that, for that he was welcome notwithstanding; and then Antonio said, "I once did lend my body for Bassanio's sake; and but for him to



whom your husband gave the ring, I should have now been dead. I dare be bound again, my soul upon the forfeit, your lord will never more break his faith with you.”—“Then you shall be his surety,” said Portia; “give him this ring, and bid him keep it better than the other.”

When Bassanio looked at this ring, he was strangely surprised to find it was the same he gave away; and then Portia told him how she was the young counsellor, and Nerissa was her clerk; and Bassanio found, to his unspeakable wonder and delight, that it was by the noble courage and wisdom of his wife that Antonio’s life was saved.

And Portia again welcomed Antonio, and gave him letters which by some chance had fallen into her hands, which contained an account of Antonio’s ships, that were supposed lost, being safely arrived in the harbour. So these tragical beginnings of this rich merchant’s story were all forgotten in the unexpected good fortune which ensued; and there was leisure to laugh at the comical adventure of the rings, and the husbands that did not know their own wives: Gratiano merrily swearing, in a sort of rhyming speech, that

—while he lived, he’d fear no other thing  
So sore, as keeping safe Nerissa’s ring.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Duke of Venice.

Prince of Morocco, }  
Prince of Arragon, } suitors to Portia.

ANTONIO, a merchant of Venice.

BASSANIO, his friend, suitor to Portia.

SALANIO, }  
SALARINO, } friends to Antonio and Bassanio.  
GRATIANO, }  
SALERIO, }

LORENZO, in love with Jessica.

SHYLOCK, a rich Jew.

TUBAL, a Jew, his friend.

LAUNCELOT GOBBO, a clown, servant to Shylock.

OLD GOBBO, father to Launcelot.

LEONARDO, servant to Bassanio.

BALTHAZAR, }  
STEPHANO, } servants to Portia.

PORTIA, a rich heiress.

NERISSA, her waiting-maid.

JESSICA, daughter to Shylock.

Magnificoes of Venice, Officers of the Court of Justice,  
Gaoler, Servants to Portia, and other Attendants.

SCENE—*Partly at Venice, and partly at Belmont,  
the seat of Portia, on the Continent.*

# THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

## ACT I.

SCENE I. *Venice. A street.*

*Enter* ANTONIO, SALARINO, *and* SALANIO.

*Antonio.* In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.  
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn; 5  
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,  
That I have much ado to know myself.

*Salarino.* Your mind is tossing on the ocean;  
There, where your argosies with portly sail,  
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood, 10  
Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,  
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,  
That curt'sy to them, do them reverence,  
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

*Salanio.* Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth, 15  
The better part of my affections would  
Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still  
Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind;  
Peering in maps for ports, and piers, and roads;  
And every object that might make me fear 20  
Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt  
Would make me sad.

*Salarino.* My wind, cooling my broth,  
Would blow me to an ague, when I thought  
What harm a wind too great at sea might do.  
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run, 25  
But I should think of shallows and of flats;  
And see my wealthy Andrew dock'd in sand,  
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs

To kiss her burial. Should I go to church,  
30 And see the holy edifice of stone,  
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,  
Which touching but my gentle vessel's side,  
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,  
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,  
35 And, in a word, but even now worth this,  
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought  
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought  
That such a thing bechanced would make me sad?  
But tell not me; I know Antonio  
40 Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

*Antonio.* Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,  
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,  
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate  
Upon the fortune of this present year:  
45 Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

*Salarino.* Why, then you are in love.

*Antonio* Fie, fie!

*Salarino.* Not in love neither? Then let us say you  
are sad,

Because you are not merry: and 'twere as easy  
For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry,  
50 Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed Janus,  
Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time:  
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes,  
And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper;  
And other of such vinegar aspect,  
55 That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile,  
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

*Salanio.* Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,  
Gratiano, and Lorenzo. Fare ye well:  
We leave you now with better company.

60 *Salarino.* I would have stay'd till I had made you  
merry,  
If worthier friends had not prevented me.

*Antonio.* Your worth is very dear in my regard

I take it, your own business calls on you,  
And you embrace the occasion to depart.

*Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO.*

*Salarino.* Good morrow, my good lords.

*Bassanio.* Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? 65  
say, when?

You grow exceeding strange: must it be so?

*Salarino.* We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.

*[Exeunt Salarino and Salanio.]*

*Lorenzo.* My Lord Bassanio, since you have found  
Antonio,

We two will leave you: but at dinner-time, 70  
I pray you, have in mind where we must meet.

*Bassanio.* I will not fail you.

*Gratiano.* You look not well, Signior Antonio;

You have too much respect upon the world:

They lose it that do buy it with much care: 75

Believe me, you are marvellously changed.

*Antonio.* I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;

A stage where every man must play a part,  
And mine a sad one.

*Gratiano.* Let me play the fool:

With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come; 80

And let my liver rather heat with wine

Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.

Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,

Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?

Sleep when he wakes? and creep into the jaundice 85

By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio,—

I love thee, and it is my love that speaks,—

There are a sort of men, whose visages

Do cream and mantle like a standing pond;

And do a wilful stillness entertain, 90

With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion

Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit;

As who should say, "I am Sir Oracle,

And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark!"

95 O my Antonio, I do know of these  
That therefore only are reputed wise  
For saying nothing; when, I am very sure,  
If they should speak, would almost damn those ears  
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.  
100 I'll tell thee more of this another time:  
But fish not, with this melancholy bait,  
For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.—  
Come, good Lorenzo. Fare ye well awhile:  
I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

105 *Lorenzo.* Well, we will leave you then till dinner-time:  
I must be one of these same dumb wise men,  
For Gratiano never lets me speak.

*Gratiano.* Well, keep me company but two years moe,  
Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

110 *Antonio.* Farewell: I'll grow a talker for this gear.

*Gra.* Thanks, i'faith; for silence is only commendable  
In a neat's tongue dried.

[*Exeunt Gratiano and Lorenzo.*]

*Antonio.* Is that any thing now?

*Bassanio.* Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing,  
115 more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two  
grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek  
all day ere you find them; and when you have them, they  
are not worth the search.

*Antonio.* Well; tell me now, what lady is the same  
120 To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage,  
That you to-day promised to tell me of?

*Bassanio.* 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,  
How much I have disabled mine estate,  
By something showing a more swelling port  
125 Than my faint means would grant continuance:  
Nor do I now make moan to be abridged  
From such a noble rate; but my chief care  
Is, to come fairly off from the great debts  
Wherein my time, something too prodigal,

Hath left me gaged. To you, Antonio, 130  
I owe the most, in money and in love;  
And from your love I have a warranty  
To unburden all my plots and purposes  
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

*Antonio.* I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it; 135  
And if it stand, as you yourself still do,  
Within the eye of honour, be assured  
My purse, my person, my extremest means,  
Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.

*Bassanio.* In my school-days, when I had lost oneshaft, 140  
I shot his fellow of the self-same flight  
The self-same way with more advised watch,  
To find the other forth; and by adventuring both  
I oft found both: I urge this childhood proof,  
Because what follows is pure innocence. 145  
I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,  
That which I owe is lost; but if you please  
To shoot another arrow that self way  
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,  
As I will watch the aim, or to find both, 150  
Or bring your latter hazard back again,  
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

*Antonio.* You know me well, and herein spend but time  
To wind about my love with circumstance; ✓  
And out of doubt you do me now more wrong 155  
In making question of my uttermost,  
Than if you had made waste of all I have:  
Then do but say to me what I should do,  
That in your knowledge may by me be done,  
And I am prest unto it: therefore, speak. 160

*Bassanio.* In Belmont is a lady richly left;  
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,  
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes  
I did receive fair speechless messages:  
Her name is Portia; nothing undervalued 165  
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:

- Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth;  
 For the four winds blow in from every coast  
 Renowned suitors; and her sunny locks  
 170 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;  
 Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,  
 And many Jasons come in quest of her.  
 O my Antonio, had I but the means  
 To hold a rival place with one of them,  
 175 I have a mind presages me such thrift,  
 That I should questionless be fortunate!
- Antonio.* Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;  
 Neither have I money, nor commodity  
 To raise a present sum: therefore, go forth;  
 180 Try what my credit can in Venice do:  
 That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,  
 To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.  
 Go, presently inquire, and so will I,  
 Where money is; and I no question make,  
 185 To have it of my trust or for my sake. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *Belmont. A room in PORTIA's house.*

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA.*

*Portia.* By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary  
 of this great world.

*Nerissa.* You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries  
 were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are:  
 5 and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with  
 too much as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean  
 happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean; superfluity  
 comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.)

*Portia.* Good sentences, and well pronounced.

10 *Nerissa.* They would be better, if well followed.

*Portia.* If to do were as easy as to know what were  
 good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's  
 cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows  
 his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were



good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow 15  
mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the  
blood; but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a  
hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good  
counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion  
to choose me a husband. O me, the word "choose"! 20  
I may neither choose whom I would, nor refuse whom  
I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the  
will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot  
choose one, nor refuse none?

*Nerissa.* Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men 25  
at their death have good inspirations: therefore, the  
lottery, that he hath devised in these three chests of gold,  
silver, and lead,—whereof who chooses his meaning  
chooses you,—will, no doubt, never be chosen by any  
rightly but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth 30  
is there in your affection towards any of these princely  
suits that are already come?

*Portia.* I pray thee, 'over-name them; and as thou  
namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my  
description, level at my affection. 35

*Nerissa.* First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

*Portia.* Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing  
but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropria-  
tion to his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself.

*Nerissa.* Then is there the County Palatine. 40

*Portia.* He doth nothing but frown; as who should say,  
"An you will not have me, choose": he hears merry tales,  
and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher  
when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in  
his youth. I had rather be married to a death's head with 45  
a bone in his mouth than to either of these: God defend  
me from these two!

*Nerissa.* How say you by the French lord, Monsieur  
Le Bon?

*Portia.* God made him, and therefore let him pass for 50  
a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker: but,

he!—why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan's, a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine; he is every man in no man; if a throstle sing, he falls straight  
55 a-capering; he will fence with his own shadow: if I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise me, I would forgive him; for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him.

*Nerissa.* What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the  
60 young baron of England?

*Portia.* You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian; and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a  
65 proper man's picture; but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour every where.

*Nerissa.* What think you of the Scottish lord, his  
70 neighbour?

*Portia.* That he hath a neighbourly charity in him; for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman, and swore he would pay him again when he was able: I think the Frenchman became his surety, and sealed under for  
75 another.

*Nerissa.* How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?

*Portia.* Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk: when  
80 he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast. An the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

*Nerissa.* If he should offer to choose, and choose the  
85 right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him.

*Portia.* Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary casket; for if the devil be within and that temptation without, I

know he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa, ere 90  
I will be married to a sponge.

*Nerissa.* You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords: they have acquainted me with their determinations; which is, indeed, to return to their home, and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some other sort 95 than your father's imposition, depending on the caskets.

*Portia.* If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so 100 reasonable; for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence; and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

*Nerissa.* Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither 105 in company of the Marquis of Montferrat?

*Portia.* Yes, yes, it was Bassanio: as I think, so was he called.

*Nerissa.* True, madam: he, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a fair lady. 110

*Portia.* I remember him well; and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

*Enter a Servant.*

How now! what news?

*Servant.* The four strangers seek for you, madam, to 115 take their leave: and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco; who brings word, the prince his master will be here to-night.

*Portia.* If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be 120 glad of his approach: if he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me.

Come, Nerissa.—Sirrah, go before.—

Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer, another knocks at the door.

*[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III. *Venice. A public place.**Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK.**Shylock.* Three thousand ducats,—well.*Bassanio.* Ay, sir, for three months.*Shylock.* For three months,—well.*Bassanio.* For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall  
5 be bound.*Shylock.* Antonio shall become bound,—well.*Bassanio.* May you stead me? will you pleasure me?  
shall I know your answer?*Shylock.* Three thousand ducats for three months,  
10 and Antonio bound.*Bassanio.* Your answer to that.*Shylock.* Antonio is a good man.*Bassanio.* Have you heard any imputation to the  
contrary?

15 *Shylock.* Ho, no, no, no, no; my meaning in saying  
he is a good man is to have you understand me that he  
is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition: he hath  
an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I  
understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third  
20 at Mexico, a fourth for England,—and other ventures he  
hath, squandered abroad. But ships are but boards,  
sailors but men: there be land-rats and water-rats,  
water-thieves and land-thieves—I mean pirates; and  
then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks. The  
25 man is, notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand  
ducats; I think I may take his bond.

*Bassanio.* Be assured you may.*Shylock.* I will be assured I may; and, that I may be  
assured, I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

30 *Bassanio.* If it please you to dine with us.

*Shylock.* Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation  
which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into.  
I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk

with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you,  
drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the 35  
Rialto?—Who is he comes here?

*Enter ANTONIO.*

*Bassanio.* This is Signior Antonio.

*Shylock.* [*Aside*] How like a fawning publican he  
I hate him for he is a Christian; [looks!  
But more, for that in low simplicity 40  
He lends out money gratis and brings down  
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.  
If I can catch him once upon the hip,  
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.  
He hates our sacred nation; and he rails, 45  
Even there where merchants most do congregate,  
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,  
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,  
If I forgive him!

*Bassanio.* Shylock, do you hear?

*Shylock.* I am debating of my present store; 50  
And, by the near guess of my memory,  
I cannot instantly raise up the gross  
Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?  
Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,  
Will furnish me. But soft! how many months 55  
Do you desire?—[*To Antonio*] Rest you fair, good signior;  
Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

*Antonio.* Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow  
By taking nor by giving of excess,  
Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend, 60  
I'll break a custom.—[*To Bassanio*] Is he yet possessed  
How much ye would?

*Shylock.* Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

*Antonio.* And for three months.

*Shylock.* I had forgot; three months; you told me so.  
Well then, your bond; and let me see; but hear you; 65  
Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow

Upon advantage.

*Antonio.* I do never use it.

*Shylock.* When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep,—  
This Jacob from our holy Abraham was  
70 (As his wise mother wrought in his behalf)  
The third possessor; ay, he was the third,—

*Antonio.* And what of him? did he take interest?

*Shylock.* No, not take interest; not, as you would say,  
Directly interest: mark what Jacob did  
75 When Laban and himself were compromised  
That all the eanlings which were streak'd and pied  
Should fall as Jacob's hire.

This was a way to thrive, and he was blest:  
And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.

80 *Antonio.* This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for;  
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,  
But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven.  
Was this inserted to make interest good?  
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

85 *Shylock.* I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast:  
But note me, signior.

*Antonio.* Mark you this, Bassanio,  
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.  
An evil soul, producing holy witness,  
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek;  
90 A goodly apple rotten at the heart:

O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

*Shylock.* Three thousand ducats; 'tis a good round sum.  
Three months from twelve; then, let me see, the rate—

*Antonio.* Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

95 *Shylock.* Signior Antonio, many a time and oft  
In the Rialto you have rated me  
About my moneys and my usances:  
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,  
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe:  
100 You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,  
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,

And all for use of that which is mine own.  
Well then, it now appears you need my help:  
Go to, then; you come to me, and you say,  
"Shylock, we would have moneys": you say so;  
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,  
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur  
Over your threshold: moneys is your suit.  
What should I say to you? Should I not say,  
"Hath a dog money? is it possible

110

A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" or  
Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key,  
With bated breath and whispering humbleness,  
Say this,—

"Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last  
You spurn'd me such a day; another time  
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies  
I'll lend you thus much moneys"?

*Antonio.* I am as like to call thee so again,  
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too. 120  
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not  
As to thy friends—for when did friendship take  
A breed for barren metal of his friend?—  
But lend it rather to thine enemy;  
Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face 125  
Exact the penalty.

*Shylock.* Why, look you, how you storm!  
I would be friends with you and have your love,  
Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,  
Supply your present wants, and take no doit  
Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me: 130  
'This is kind I offer.

*Bassanio.* This were kindness.

*Shylock.* This kindness will I show:  
Go with me to a notary, seal me there  
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,  
If you repay me not on such a day, 135  
In such a place, such sum or sums as are

Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit  
Be nominated for an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken

140 In what part of your body pleaseth me.

*Antonio.* Content, i'faith: I'll seal to such a bond,  
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

*Bassanio.* You shall not seal to such a bond for me:  
I'll rather dwell in my necessity.

145 *Antonio.* Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it:  
Within these two months, that's a month before  
This bond expires, I do expect return  
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

*Shylock.* O father Abram, what these Christians are,  
150 Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect  
The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this;  
If he should break his day, what should I gain  
By the exaction of the forfeiture?

A pound of man's flesh taken from a man  
155 Is not so estimable, profitable neither,  
As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I say,  
To buy his favour, I extend this friendship:  
If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;  
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

160 *Antonio.* Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

*Shylock.* Then meet me forthwith at the notary's;  
Give him direction for this merry bond;  
And I will go and purse the ducats straight;  
See to my house, left in the fearful guard

165 Of an unthrifty knave, and presently  
I will be with you.

*Antonio.* Hie thee, gentle Jew. [*Exit Shylock.*  
The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

*Bassanio.* I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

*Antonio.* Come on: in this there can be no dismay;  
170 My ships come home a month before the day.

[*Exeunt.*]



## ACT II.

SCENE I. *Belmont. A room in PORTIA's house.**Flourish of cornets. Enter the Prince of Morocco and his Train; PORTIA, NERISSA, and other of her Attendants.*

*Morocco.* Mislike me not for my complexion,  
 The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,  
 To whom I am a neighbour and near bred.  
 Bring me the fairest creature northward born,  
 Where Phœbus' fire scarce thaws the icicles, 5  
 And let us make incision for your love,  
 To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.  
 I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine  
 Hath fear'd the valiant: by my love, I swear  
 The best-regarded virgins of our clime 10  
 Have loved it too: I would not change this hue,  
 Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

*Portia.* In terms of choice I am not solely led  
 By nice direction of a maiden's eyes;  
 Besides, the lottery of my destiny 15  
 Bars me the right of voluntary choosing:  
 But if my father had not scanted me,  
 And hedged me by his wit, to yield myself  
 His wife who wins me by that means I told you,  
 Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair 20  
 As any comer I have look'd on yet  
 For my affection.

*Morocco.* Even for that I thank you:  
 Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets,  
 To try my fortune. By this scimitar,  
 That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince 25  
 That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,  
 I would outstare the sternest eyes that look,  
 Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,  
 Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,  
 Yea, mock the lion when he roars for prey, 30

To win thee, lady. But, alas the while!  
 If Hercules and Lichas play at dice  
 Which is the better man, the greater throw  
 May turn by fortune from the weaker hand:  
 35 So is Alcides beaten by his page;  
 And so may I, blind Fortune leading me,  
 Miss that which one unworthier may attain,  
 And die with grieving.

*Portia.* You must take your chance;  
 And either not attempt to choose at all,  
 40 Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong,  
 Never to speak to lady afterward  
 In way of marriage: therefore be advised.

*Mor.* Nor will not. Come, bring me unto my chance.

*Portia.* First, forward to the temple: after dinner  
 45 Your hazard shall be made.

*Morocco.* Good fortune then!  
 To make me blest or curs'd 'st among men.

[*Cornets, and exeunt.*]

## SCENE II. Venice. A street.

*Enter LAUNCELOT.*

*Launcelot.* Certainly my conscience will serve me to  
 run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow,  
 and tempts me, saying to me, "Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo,  
 good Launcelot," or "good Gobbo," or "good Launcelot  
 5 Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away." My  
 conscience says, "No; take heed, honest Launcelot; take  
 heed, honest Gobbo," or, as aforesaid, "honest Launce-  
 lot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels."  
 Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: "*Via!*"  
 10 says the fiend; "away!" says the fiend; "for the heavens,  
 rouse up a brave mind," says the fiend, "and run." Well,  
 my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says  
 very wisely to me, "My honest friend Launcelot, being  
 an honest man's son,"—or rather an honest woman's

son;—well, my conscience says, “Launcelot, budge 15  
not.” “Budge,” says the fiend. “Budge not,” says my  
conscience. Conscience, say I, you counsel well; fiend,  
say I, you counsel well: to be ruled by my conscience,  
I should stay with the Jew my master, who—God bless  
the mark!—is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the 20  
Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your  
reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the  
very devil incarnation; and, in my conscience, my con-  
science is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to  
counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the 25  
more friendly counsel: I will run, fiend; my heels are at  
your commandment; I will run.

*Enter Old GOBBO, with a basket.*

*Gobbo.* Master young man, you, I pray you, which is  
the way to master Jew's?

*Launcelot.* [*Aside*] O heavens, this is my true-begotten 30  
father! who, being more than sand-blind, high-gravel-  
blind, knows me not: I will try confusions with him.

*Gobbo.* Master young gentleman, I pray you, which is  
the way to master Jew's?

*Launcelot.* Turn up on your right hand at the next 35  
turning, but, at the next turning of all, on your left;  
marry, at the very next turning, turn of no hand, but  
turn down indirectly to the Jew's house.

*Gobbo.* By God's sonties, 'twill be a hard way to hit.  
Can you tell me whether one Launcelot, that dwells with 40  
him, dwell with him or no?

*Launcelot.* Talk you of young Master Launcelot?—  
[*Aside*] Mark me now; now will I raise the waters.—  
Talk you of young Master Launcelot?

*Gobbo.* No master, sir, but a poor man's son: his 45  
father, though I say it, is an honest exceeding poor man,  
and, God be thanked, well to live.

*Launcelot.* Well, let his father be what a' will, we talk  
of young Master Launcelot.

50 *Gobbo*. Your worship's friend, and Launcelot, sir.

*Launcelot*. But, I pray you, *ergo*, old man, *ergo*, I beseech you, talk you of young Master Launcelot?

*Gobbo*. Of Launcelot, an't please your mastership.

*Launcelot*. *Ergo*, Master Launcelot. Talk not of  
55 Master Launcelot, father; for the young gentleman, according to Fates and Destinies, and such odd sayings, the Sisters Three, and such branches of learning, is, indeed, deceased; or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to heaven.

*Gobbo*. Marry, God forbid! the boy was the very staff  
60 of my age, my very prop.

*Launcelot*. [*Aside*] Do I look like a cudgel or a hovel-post, a staff or a prop?—Do you know me, father?

*Gobbo*. Alack the day, I know you not, young gentleman: but, I pray you, tell me, is my boy—God rest his  
65 soul!—alive or dead?

*Launcelot*. Do you not know me, father?

*Gobbo*. Alack! sir, I am sand-blind; I know you not.

*Launcelot*. Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me: it is a wise father that  
70 knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son: give me your blessing [*Kneels*]: truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long,—a man's son may; but in the end truth will out.

*Gobbo*. Pray you, sir, stand up: I am sure you are not  
75 Launcelot, my boy.

*Launcelot*. Pray you, let's have no more fooling about it, but give me your blessing: I am Launcelot, your boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall be.

*Gobbo*. I cannot think you are my son.

80 *Launcelot*. I know not what I shall think of that: but I am Launcelot, the Jew's man; and I am sure Margery your wife is my mother.

*Gobbo*. Her name is Margery, indeed; I'll be sworn, if thou be Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood.  
8 Lord worship might he be! what a beard hast thou

got! thou hast got more hair on thy chin than Dobbin my fill-horse has on his tail.

*Launcelot.* [*Rising*] It should seem, then, that Dobbin's tail grows backward; I am sure he had more hair of his tail than I have of my face when I last saw him. 90

*Gobbo.* Lord, how art thou charged! How dost thou and thy master agree? I have brought him a present. How 'gree you now?

*Launcelot.* Well, well: but, for mine own part, as I have set up my rest to run away, so I will not rest till I 95 have run some ground. My master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter: I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come: give me your present to one Master Bassanio, who, indeed, gives rare new liveries: if 100 I serve not him, I will run as far as God has any ground. O rare fortune! here comes the man: to him, father; for I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer.

*Enter BASSANIO, with LEONARDO and other Followers.*

*Bass.* You may do so; but let it be so hasted that supper be ready at the furthest by five of the clock. See these 105 letters delivered; put the liveries to making; and desire Gratiano to come anon to my lodging. [*Exit a Servant.*]

*Launcelot.* To him, father.

*Gobbo.* God bless your worship!

*Bassanio.* Gramercy: wouldst thou aught with me? 110

*Gobbo.* Here's my son, sir, a poor boy,—

*Launcelot.* Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's man; that would, sir, as my father shall specify,—

*Gobbo.* He hath a great infection, sir, as one would say, to serve,— 115

*Launcelot.* Indeed, the short and the long is, I serve the Jew, and have a desire, as my father shall specify,—

*Gobbo.* His master and he, saving your worship's reverence, are scarce cater-cousins,—

*Launcelot.* To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, 120

having done me wrong, doth cause me, as my father, being, I hope, an old man, shall frutify unto you,—

*Gobbo*. I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow upon your worship; and my suit is,—

- 125 *Launcelot*. In very brief, the suit is impertinent to myself, as your worship shall know by this honest old man; and, though I say it, though old man, yet, poor man, my father.

*Bassanio*. One speak for both. What would you?

*Launcelot*. Serve you, sir.

- 130 *Gobbo*. That is the very defect of the matter, sir.

*Bass*. I know thee well; thou hast obtain'd thy suit: Shylock thy master spoke with me this day, And hath preferr'd thee,—if it be preferment To leave a rich Jew's service, to become

- 135 The follower of so poor a gentleman.

*Launcelot*. The old proverb is very well parted between my master Shylock and you, sir: you have the grace of God, sir, and he hath enough.

*Bass*. Thou speak'st it well. Go, father, with thy son.

- 140 Take leave of thy old master, and inquire

My lodging out.—[*To his Followers*] Give him a livery More guarded than his fellows': see it done.

- Launcelot*. Father, in. I cannot get a service, no; I have ne'er a tongue in my head. Well [*Looking on his*  
145 *palm*], if any man in Italy have a fairer table, which doth offer to swear upon a book, I shall have good fortune! Go to, here's a simple line of life! here's a small trifle of wives! alas, fifteen wives is nothing! eleven widows and nine maids is a simple coming-in for one man; and then  
150 to scape drowning thrice, and to be in peril of my life with the edge of a feather-bed,—here are simple scapes! Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this gear.—Father, come; I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye. [*Exeunt Launcelot and old Gobbo*].

- 155 *Bassanio*. I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this: These things being bought and orderly bestow'd,

Return in haste, for I do feast to-night

My best-esteem'd acquaintance: hie thee, go.

*Leonardo.* My best endeavours shall be done herein. ✓

*Enter GRATIANO.*

*Gra.* Where is your master?

*Leonardo.* Yonder, sir, he walks. [*Exit.* 160

*Gratiano.* Signior Bassanio!

*Bassanio.* Gratiano!

*Gratiano.* I have a suit to you.

*Bassanio.* You have obtain'd it.

*Gratiano.* You must not deny me: I must go with  
you to Belmont. 165

*Bass.* Why, then you must. But hear thee, Gratiano:  
Thou art too wild, too rude, and bold of voice;  
Parts that become thee happily enough,  
And in such eyes as ours appear not faults;  
But where thou art not known, why, there they show 170  
Something too liberal. Pray thee, take pain  
To allay with some cold drops of modesty  
Thy skipping spirit; lest, through thy wild behaviour,  
I be misconstrued in the place I go to  
And lose my hopes.

*Gratiano.* Signior Bassanio, hear me: 175  
If I do not put on a sober habit,  
Talk with respect, and swear but now and then,  
Wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely;  
Nay, more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes  
Thus with my hat, and sigh, and say amen; 180  
Use all the observance of civility,  
Like one well studied in a sad ostent  
To please his grandam,—never trust me more.

*Bassanio.* Well, we shall see your bearing.

*Gra.* Nay, but I bar to-night: you shall not gauge me 185  
By what we do to-night.

*Bassanio.* No, that were pity:  
I would entreat you rather to put on

Your boldest suit of mirth, for we have friends  
That purpose merriment. But fare you well:

190 I have some business.

*Gratiano.* And I must to Lorenzo and the rest:  
But we will visit you at supper-time. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III. *The same. A room in SHYLOCK'S house.*

*Enter JESSICA and LAUNCELOT.*

*Jessica.* I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so:  
Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,  
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.  
But fare thee well; there is a ducat for thee:  
5 And, Launcelot, soon at supper shalt thou see  
Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest:  
Give him this letter; do it secretly;  
And so farewell: I would not have my father  
See me in talk with thee.

10 *Launcelot.* Adieu! tears exhibit my tongue. Most  
beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew! if a Christian do not  
play the knave and get thee, I am much deceived. But  
adieu: these foolish drops do somewhat drown my manly  
spirit: adieu.

15 *Jessica.* Farewell, good Launcelot. [Exit *Launcelot.*  
Alack, what heinous sin is it in me  
To be ashamed to be my father's child!  
But though I am a daughter to his blood,  
I am not to his manners. O Lorenzo,  
20 If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife,  
Become a Christian and thy loving wife! [Exit.]

SCENE IV. *The same. A street.*

*Enter GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALARINO, and SALANIO.*

*Lorenzo.* Nay, we will slink away in supper-time,  
Disguise us at my lodging, and return  
All in an hour.



*Gratiano.* We have not made good preparation.

*Salarino.* We have not spoke us yet of torch-bearers. 5

*Salanio.* 'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly order'd,  
And better in my mind not undertook.

*Lorenzo.* 'Tis now but four o'clock: we have two hours  
To furnish us.

*Enter LAUNCELOT, with a letter.*

Friend Launcelot, what's the news?

*Launcelot.* An it shall please you to break up this, it to  
shall seem to signify.

*Lorenzo.* I know the hand: in faith, 'tis a fair hand;  
And whiter than the paper it writ on  
Is the fair hand that writ.

*Gratiano.* Love-news, in faith.

*Launcelot.* By your leave, sir. 15

*Lorenzo.* Whither goest thou?

*Launcelot.* Marry, sir, to bid my old master the Jew  
to sup to-night with my new master the Christian.

*Lorenzo.* Hold here, take this [*Gives money*]: tell gentle  
Jessica

I will not fail her; speak it privately; 20

Go.—Gentlemen, [*Exit Launcelot.*]

Will you prepare you for this masque to-night?

I am provided of a torch-bearer.

*Salarino.* Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight.

*Salanio.* And so will I.

*Lorenzo.* Meet me and Gratiano 25

At Gratiano's lodging some hour hence.

*Salarino.* 'Tis good we do so.

[*Exeunt Salarino and Salanio.*]

*Gratiano.* Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

*Lorenzo.* I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed  
How I shall take her from her father's house; 30

What gold and jewels she is furnish'd with;

What page's suit she hath in readiness.

If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven,

It will be for his gentle daughter's sake:  
 35 And never dare misfortune cross her foot,  
 Unless she do it under this excuse,  
 That she is issue to a faithless Jew.  
 Come, go with me: peruse this as thou goest:  
 Fair Jessica shall be my torch-bearer. [Exeunt.]

SCENE V. *The same. Before SHYLOCK'S house.*

*Enter SHYLOCK and LAUNCELOT.*

*Shy.* Well, thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge,  
 The difference of old Shylock and Bassanio:—  
 What, Jessica!—thou shalt not gormandize,  
 As thou hast done with me;—what, Jessica!—  
 5 And sleep and snore, and rend apparel out;—  
 Why, Jessica, I say!

*Launcelot.* Why, Jessica!

*Shylock.* Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.

*Launcelot.* Your worship was wont to tell me I could  
 do nothing without bidding.

*Enter JESSICA.*

10 *Jessica.* Call you? what is your will?

*Shylock.* I am bid forth to supper, Jessica:  
 There are my keys.—But wherefore should I go?  
 I am not bid for love; they flatter me:  
 But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon

15 The prodigal Christian.—Jessica, my girl,  
 Look to my house.—I am right loth to go:  
 There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,  
 For I did dream of money-bags to-night.

*Launcelot.* I beseech you, sir, go: my young master  
 20 doth expect your reproach.

*Shylock.* So do I his.

*Launcelot.* And they have conspired together,—I will  
 not say you shall see a masque; but if you do, then it was  
 not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black-

Monday last at six o'clock i' the morning, falling out 25  
that year on Ash-Wednesday was four year in the after-  
noon.

*Shy.* What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica:  
Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum  
And the vile squealing of the wry-neck'd fife, 30  
Clamber not you up to the casements then,  
Nor thrust your head into the public street,  
To gaze on Christian fools with varnish'd faces;  
But stop my house's ears, I mean my casements:  
Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter 35  
My sober house.—By Jacob's staff, I swear  
I have no mind of feasting forth to-night:  
But I will go. Go you before me, sirrah;  
Say I will come.

*Launcelot.* I will go before, sir.—Mistress, look out at 40  
window, for all this;

There will come a Christian by,  
Will be worth a Jewess' eye. *[Exit.*

*Shylock.* What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha?

*Jes.* His words were, "Farewell, mistress"; nothing 45  
else.

*Shy.* The patch is kind enough, but a huge feeder,  
Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day  
More than the wild-cat: drones hive not with me;  
Therefore I part with him; and part with him  
To one that I would have him help to waste 50  
His borrow'd purse.—Well, Jessica, go in:  
Perhaps I will return immediately:  
Do as I bid you; shut doors after you:  
Fast bind, fast find;  
A proverb never stale in thrifty mind. *[Exit. 55*

*Jessica.* Farewell; and if my fortune be not crost,  
I have a father, you a daughter, lost. *[Exit.*

SCENE VI. *The same.**Enter GRATIANO and SALARINO, masqued.*

*Gratiano.* This is the pent-house under which Lorenzo  
Desired us to make stand.

*Salarino.* His hour is almost past.

*Gratiano.* And it is marvel he out-dwells his hour,  
For lovers ever run before the clock.

5 *Salarino.* O, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly  
To seal love's bonds new-made, than they are wont  
To keep obliged faith unforfeited!

*Gratiano.* That ever holds: who riseth from a feast  
With that keen appetite that he sits down?  
10 Where is the horse that doth untread again  
His tedious measures with the unbated fire  
That he did pace them first? All things that are,  
Are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd. ✓  
How like a younker or a prodigal  
15 The scarfed bark puts from her native bay,  
Hugg'd and embraced by the wanton wind!  
How like a prodigal doth she return,  
With over-weather'd ribs, and ragged sails,  
Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the wanton wind!  
20 *Salar.* Here comes Lorenzo: more of this hereafter.

*Enter LORENZO.*

*Lor.* Sweet friends, your patience for my long abode;  
Not I, but my affairs, have made you wait:  
When you shall please to play the thieves for wives,  
I'll watch as long for you then. Approach;  
25 Here dwells my father Jew. Ho! who's within?

*Enter JESSICA, above, in boy's clothes.*

*Jessica.* Who are you? Tell me, for more certainty,  
Albeit I'll swear that I do know your tongue.

*Lorenzo.* Lorenzo, and thy love.

*Jessica.* Lorenzo, certain, and my love, indeed,  
For who love I so much? And now who knows 30  
But you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

*Lor.* Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou  
art.

*Jessica.* Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.  
I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,  
For I am much ashamed of my exchange: 35  
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see  
The pretty follies that themselves commit;  
For if they could, Cupid himself would blush  
To see me thus transformed to a boy.

*Lorenzo.* Descend, for you must be my torch-bearer. 40

*Jessica.* What, must I hold a candle to my shames?  
They in themselves, good sooth, are too too light.  
Why, 'tis an office of discovery, love;  
And I should be obscured.

*Lorenzo.* So are you, sweet,  
Even in the lovely garnish of a boy. 45  
But come at once;  
For the close night doth play the runaway,  
And we are stay'd for at Bassanio's feast.

*Jessica.* I will make fast the doors, and gild myself  
With some more ducats, and be with you straight. 50  
[Exit above.]

*Gratiano.* Now, by my hood, a Gentile, and no Jew.

*Lorenzo.* Beshrew me but I love her heartily;  
For she is wise, if I can judge of her;  
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true;  
And true she is, as she hath proved herself; 55  
And therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true,  
Shall she be placed in my constant soul.

*Enter JESSICA, below.*

What, art thou come?—On, gentlemen; away!  
Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.

[Exit with *Jessica* and *Salarino*.]

*Enter ANTONIO.*

60 *Antonio.* Who's there?

*Gratiano.* Signior Antonio!

*Antonio.* Fie, fie, Gratiano! where are all the rest?

'Tis nine o'clock; our friends all stay for you.

No masque to-night: the wind is come about;

65 Bassanio presently will go aboard:

I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

*Gratiano.* I am glad on't: I desire no more delight  
Than to be under sail and gone to-night. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE VII. *Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.*

*Flourish of cornets. Enter PORTIA, with the Prince  
of Morocco, and their Trains.*

*Portia.* Go draw aside the curtains, and discover  
The several caskets to this noble prince.—  
Now make your choice.

*Mor.* The first, of gold, who this inscription bears,  
5 "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire";  
The second, silver, which this promise carries,  
"Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves";  
This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt,  
"Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."  
10 How shall I know if I do choose the right?

*Por.* The one of them contains my picture, prince:  
If you choose that, then I am yours withal.

*Morocco.* Some god direct my judgment! Let me see;  
I will survey the inscriptions back again.

15 What says this leaden casket?

"Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."

Must give,—for what? for lead? hazard for lead?

This casket threatens: men that hazard all

Do it in hope of fair advantages:

20 A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross;

I'll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead.

What says the silver with her virgin hue?  
"Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves."  
As much as he deserves! Pause there, Morocco,  
And weigh thy value with an even hand: 25  
If thou be'st rated by thy estimation,  
Thou dost deserve enough; and yet enough  
May not extend so far as to the lady:  
And yet to be afraid of my deserving  
Were but a weak disabling of myself. 30  
As much as I deserve! Why, that's the lady:  
I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,  
In graces and in qualities of breeding;  
But more than these, in love I do deserve.  
What if I stray'd no further, but chose here? 35  
Let's see once more this saying graved in gold:  
"Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire."  
Why, that's the lady; all the world desires her;  
From the four corners of the earth they come,  
To kiss this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint: 40  
The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds  
Of wide Arabia are as throughfares now  
For princes to come view fair Portia:  
The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head  
Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar 45  
To stop the foreign spirits; but they come,  
As o'er a brook, to see fair Portia.  
One of these three contains her heavenly picture.  
Is't like that lead contains her? 'Twere damnation  
To think so base a thought: it were too gross 50  
To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave.  
Or shall I think in silver she's immured,  
Being ten times undervalued to tried gold?  
O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem  
Was set in worse than gold. They have in England 55  
A coin that bears the figure of an angel  
Stamped in gold, but that's insculp'd upon;  
But here an angel in a golden bed

Lies all within.—Deliver me the key:

60 Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

*Por.* There, take it, prince; and if my form lie there,  
Then I am yours. [*He opens the golden casket.*

*Morocco.* O hell! what have we here?

A carrion Death, within whose empty eye

There is a written scroll! I'll read the writing. [*Reads.*

65 "All that glisters is not gold;

Often have you heard that told:

Many a man his life hath sold

But my outside to behold:

Gilded tombs do worms infold.

70 Had you been as wise as bold,

Young in limbs, in judgment old,

Your answer had not been inscroll'd:

Fare you well; your suit is cold."

Cold, indeed; and labour lost:

75 Then, farewell, heat; and welcome, frost!

Portia, adieu. I have too grieved a heart

To take a tedious leave: thus losers part.

[*Exit with his Train. Flourish of Cornets.*

*Portia.* A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go.

Let all of his complexion choose me so. [*Exeunt.*

#### SCENE VIII. Venice. A street.

*Enter SALARINO and SALANIO.*

*Salarino.* Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail:

With him is Gratiano gone along;

And in their ship I am sure Lorenzo is not.

*Salanio.* The villain Jew with outcries raised the duke;  
5 Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.

*Salarino.* He came too late, the ship was under sail:

But there the duke was given to understand

That in a gondola were seen together

Lorenzo and his amorous Jessica:

10 Besides, Antonio certified the duke



They were not with Bassanio in his ship.

*Salanio.* I never heard a passion so confused,  
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,  
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:  
"My daughter!—O my ducats!—O my daughter!  
Fled with a Christian!—O my Christian ducats!—  
Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter!  
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,  
Of double ducats, stolen from me by my daughter!  
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,  
Stolen by my daughter!—Justice! find the girl!  
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats!"

*Salarino.* Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,  
Crying, his stones, his daughter, and his ducats.

*Salanio.* Let good Antonio look he keep his day,  
Or he shall pay for this.

*Salarino.* Marry, well remember'd.  
I reason'd with a Frenchman yesterday,  
Who told me, in the narrow seas that part  
The French and English, there miscarried  
A vessel of our country richly fraught:  
I thought upon Antonio when he told me;  
And wish'd in silence that it were not his.

*Salanio.* You were best to tell Antonio what you hear;  
Yet do not suddenly, for it may grieve him.

*Salarino.* A kinder gentleman treads not the earth.  
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part:  
Bassanio told him he would make some speed  
Of his return: he answer'd, "Do not so;  
Slubber not business for my sake, Bassanio,  
But stay the very riping of the time;  
And for the Jew's bond which he hath of me,  
Let it not enter in your mind of love:  
Be merry; and employ your chiefest thoughts  
To courtship and such fair ostents of love  
As shall conveniently become you there:"  
And even there, his eye being big with tears,

Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,  
 And with affection wondrous sensible  
 He wrung Bassanio's hand; and so they parted.

50 *Salanio.* I think he only loves the world for him.  
 I pray thee, let us go and find him out,  
 And quicken his embraced heaviness  
 With some delight or other.

*Salarino.* Do we so. [Exeunt.

SCENE IX. *Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.*

*Enter NERISSA with a Servant.*

*Nerissa.* Quick, quick, I pray thee; draw the curtain  
 straight:

The Prince of Arragon hath ta'en his oath,  
 And comes to his election presently.

*Flourish of cornets. Enter the Prince of Arragon,  
 PORTIA, and their Trains.*

*Portia.* Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince:  
 5 If you choose that wherein I am contain'd,  
 Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemnized:  
 But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,  
 You must be gone from hence immediately.

*Arragon.* I am enjoin'd by oath to observe three things:  
 10 First, never to unfold to any one  
 Which casket 'twas I chose; next, if I fail  
 Of the right casket, never in my life  
 To woo a maid in way of marriage;  
 Lastly,

15 If I do fail in fortune of my choice,  
 Immediately to leave you and be gone.

*Portia.* To these injunctions every one doth swear  
 That comes to hazard for my worthless self.

*Arragon.* And so have I address'd me. Fortune now  
 20 To my heart's hope!—Gold, silver, and base lead.  
 "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."

You shall look fairer, ere I give or hazard.  
 What says the golden chest? ha! let me see:  
 "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire."  
 What many men desire! that "many" may be meant 25  
 By the fool multitude, that choose by show,  
 Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach;  
 Which pries not to the interior, but, like the martlet,  
 Builds in the weather on the outward wall,  
 Even in the force and road of casualty. 30  
 I will not choose what many men desire,  
 Because I will not jump with common spirits,  
 And rank me with the barbarous multitudes.  
 Why, then to thee, thou silver treasure-house;  
 Tell me once more what title thou dost bear: 35  
 "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves:"  
 And well said too; for who shall go about  
 To cozen fortune and be honourable  
 Without the stamp of merit? Let none presume  
 To wear an undeserved dignity. 40  
 O, that estates, degrees, and offices,  
 Were not derived corruptly! and that clear honour  
 Were purchased by the merit of the wearer!  
 How many then should cover that stand bare!  
 How many be commanded that command! 45  
 How much low peasantry would then be glean'd  
 From the true seed of honour! and how much honour  
 Pick'd from the chaff and ruin of the times,  
 To be new-varnish'd! Well, but to my choice:  
 "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves." 50  
 I will assume desert. Give me a key for this,  
 And instantly unlock my fortunes here.

*[He opens the silver casket.]*

*Portia.* Too long a pause for that which you find there.

*Arragon.* What's here? the portrait of a blinking idiot,  
 Presenting me a schedule! I will read it. 55  
 How much unlike art thou to Portia!  
 How much unlike my hopes and my deservings!

"Who chooseth me shall have as much as he deserves."

Did I deserve no more than a fool's head?

60 Is that my prize? are my deserts no better?

*Portia.* To offend, and judge, are distinct offices,  
And of opposed natures.

*Arragon.* What is here?

[*Reads*] "The fire seven times tried this:  
Seven times tried that judgment is,  
65 That did never choose amiss.  
Some there be that shadows kiss;  
Such have but a shadow's bliss.  
There be fools alive, I wis,  
Silver'd o'er; and so was this.  
70 I will ever be your head:  
So be gone; you are sped."

Still more fool I shall appear

By the time I linger here:

With one fool's head I came to woo,

75 But I go away with two.

Sweet, adieu. I'll keep my oath,

Patiently to bear my wroth. [*Exit with his Train.*]

*Portia.* Thus hath the candle sing'd the moth.

O, these deliberate fools! when they do choose,

80 They have the wisdom by their wit to lose.

| *Nerissa.* The ancient saying is no heresy;  
Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.

*Portia.* Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

*Enter a Servant.*

*Servant.* Where is my lady?

*Portia.* Here: what would my lord?

85 *Servant.* Madam, there is alighted at your gate

A young Venetian, one that comes before

To signify the approaching of his lord;

From whom he bringeth sensible regrets,

To wit, besides commends and courteous breath,

Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen  
So likely an ambassador of love: 90

A day in April never came so sweet,  
To show how costly summer was at hand,  
As this fore-spurrer comes before his lord.

*Portia.* No more, I pray thee: I am half afeard 95  
Thou wilt say anon he is some kin to thee,  
Thou spend'st such high-day wit in praising him.—  
Come, come, Nerissa; for I long to see  
Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly.

*Nerissa.* Bassanio, lord Love, if thy will it be! [*Exeunt.* 100]

## ACT III.

SCENE I. *Venice. A street.*

*Enter SALANIO and SALARINO.*

*Salanio.* Now, what news on the Rialto?

*Salarino.* Why, yet it lives there unchecked, that  
Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrecked on the narrow  
seas; the Goodwins, I think they call the place; a very  
dangerous flat and fatal, where the carcasses of many a  
tall ship lie buried, as they say, if my gossip Report be  
an honest woman of her word.

*Salanio.* I would she were as lying a gossip in that  
as ever knapped ginger or made her neighbours believe  
she wept for the death of a third husband. But it is 10  
true, without any slips of prolixity or crossing the plain  
highway of talk, that the good Antonio, the honest  
Antonio,—O, that I had a title good enough to keep  
his name company!—

*Salarino.* Come, the full stop. 15

*Salanio.* Ha, what sayest thou? Why, the end is, he  
hath lost a ship.

*Salarino.* I would it might prove the end of his losses.

*Salanio.* Let me say amen betimes, lest the devil cross  
my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew. 20

*Enter SHYLOCK.*

How now, Shylock! what news among the merchants?

*Shylock.* You knew, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight.

*Salarino.* That's certain: I, for my part, knew the  
25 tailor that made the wings she flew withal.

*Salanio.* And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledged; and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam.

*Shylock.* She is damned for it.

30 *Salarino.* That's certain, if the devil may be her judge.

*Shylock.* My own flesh and blood to rebel!

*Salarino.* There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory; more between your bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish. But  
35 tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?

*Shylock.* There I have another bad match: a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto; a beggar, that was used to come so smug upon the mart;  
40 let him look to his bond: he was wont to call me usurer; let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy; let him look to his bond.

*Salarino.* Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh: what's that good for?

45 *Shylock.* To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his  
50 reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and  
55 summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not

bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge: if a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his 60 sufferance be by Christian example? why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

*Enter a Servant.*

*Servant.* Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house, and desires to speak with you both. 65

*Salarino.* We have been up and down to seek him.

*Salanio.* Here comes another of the tribe: a third cannot be matched, unless the devil himself turn Jew.

*[Exeunt Salanio, Salarino, and Servant.]*

*Enter TUBAL.*

*Shylock.* How now, Tubal! what news from Genoa? hast thou found my daughter? 70

*Tubal.* I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.

*Shylock.* Why, there, there, there, there! a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it 75 till now: two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? Why, so: and I know not what's spent in the 80 search: why, thou loss upon loss! the thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge: nor no ill luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders; no sighs but of my breathing; no tears but of my shedding. 85

*Tubal.* Yes, other men have ill luck too: Antonio, as I heard in Genoa,—

*Shylock.* What, what, what? ill luck, ill luck?

*Tubal.* Hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

90 *Shylock.* I thank God, I thank God! Is't true, is't true?

*Tubal.* I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wreck.

*Shylock.* I thank thee, good Tubal: good news, good news! ha, ha! where? in Genoa?

95 *Tubal.* Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, in one night fourscore ducats.

*Shylock.* Thou stickest a dagger in me: I shall never see my gold again: fourscore ducats at a sitting! four-score ducats!

100 *Tubal.* There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my company to Venice, that swear he cannot choose but break.

*Shylock.* I am very glad of it; I'll plague him; I'll torture him: I am glad of it.

105 *Tubal.* One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey.

*Shylock.* Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal: it was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor: I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.

110 *Tubal.* But Antonio is certainly undone.

*Shylock.* Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, fee me an officer; bespeak him a fortnight before. I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will. Go, Tubal,  
115 and meet me at our synagogue; go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal.

[*Exeunt.*]



SCENE II. *Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.*

*Enter BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA,  
and Attendants.*

*Portia.* I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two  
Before you hazard; for, in choosing wrong,  
I lose your company: therefore, forbear awhile.  
There's something tells me—but it is not love—  
I would not lose you; and you know yourself, 5  
Hate counsels not in such a quality.  
But lest you should not understand me well,—  
And yet a maiden hath no tongue, but thought,—  
I would detain you here some month or two  
Before you venture for me. I could teach you 10  
How to choose right, but then I am forsworn;  
So will I never be: so may you miss me;  
But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,  
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,  
They have o'erlook'd me and divided me; 15  
One half of me is yours, the other half yours,—  
Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then yours,  
And so all yours! O, these naughty times  
Puts bars between the owners and their rights!  
And so, though yours, not yours: prove it so, 20  
Let fortune go to hell for it, not I.  
I speak too long; but 'tis to peize the time,  
To eke it, and to draw it out in length,  
To stay you from election.

*Bassanio.* Let me choose;  
For, as I am, I live upon the rack. 25

*Portia.* Upon the rack, Bassanio! then confess  
What treason there is mingled with your love.

*Bassanio.* None but that ugly treason of mistrust,  
Which makes me fear the enjoying of my love:  
There may as well be amity and life 30  
'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love.

*Portia.* Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack,  
Where men enforced do speak any thing.

*Bassanio.* Promise me life, and I'll confess the truth.

35 *Portia.* Well then, confess and live.

*Bassanio.* Confess and love  
Had been the very sum of my confession:  
O happy torment, when my torturer  
Doth teach me answers for deliverance!  
But let me to my fortune and the caskets.

[*Curtain drawn from before the caskets.*]

40 *Portia.* Away, then! I am lock'd in one of them:

If you do love me, you will find me out.—*जुनकर जाण सत्य सनेह* *एदि*

Nerissa, and the rest, stand all aloof.—

Let music sound while he doth make his choice;

Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end,

45 Fading in music: that the comparison  
May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream  
And watery death-bed for him. He may win;  
And what is music then? then music is  
Even as the flourish when true subjects bow

50 To a new-crowned monarch: such it is  
As are those dulcet sounds in break of day  
That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear,  
And summon him to marriage.—Now he goes,  
With no less presence, but with much more love,

55 Than young Alcides, when he did redeem  
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy  
To the sea-monster: I stand for sacrifice;  
The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,  
With bleared visages, come forth to view

60 The issue of the exploit. Go, Hercules!  
Live thou, I live: with much much more dismay  
I view the fight than thou that mak'st the fray.

*Music, whilst BASSANIO comments on the caskets to himself*

## SONG.

Tell me where is fancy bred,  
Or in the heart or in the head?  
How begot, how nourished? 65

Reply, reply.

It is engender'd in the eyes,  
With gazing fed; and fancy dies  
In the cradle where it lies.

Let us all ring fancy's knell; 70

I'll begin it,—Ding, dong, bell.

*All.* Ding, dong, bell.

*Bassanio.* So may the outward shows be least themselves:

The world is still deceived with ornament.  
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt, 75

But, being season'd with a gracious voice,  
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,  
What damned error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it and approve it with a text,  
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament? 80

There is no vice so simple but assumes  
Some mark of virtue on his outward parts:  
How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false  
As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins  
The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars; 85

Who, inward search'd, have livers white as milk;  
And these assume but valour's excrement  
To render them redoubted! Look on beauty,  
And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight;  
Which therein works a miracle in nature, 90  
Making them lightest that wear most of it:

So are those crisped snaky golden locks  
Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,  
Upon supposed fairness, often known  
To be the dowry of a second head, 95

The skull that bred them in the sepulchre.  
 Thus ornament is but the guiled shore  
 To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf  
 Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,

100 The seeming truth which cunning times put on  
 To entrap the wisest. Therefore, thou gaudy gold,  
 Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee;  
 Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge  
 'Tween man and man: but thou, thou meagre lead,  
 105 Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught,  
 Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence;  
 And here choose I: joy be the consequence!

*Portia.* How all the other passions fleet to air,  
 As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,  
 110 And shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy!  
 O love, be moderate; allay thy ecstasy;  
 In measure rain thy joy; scant this excess!  
 I feel too much thy blessing: make it less,  
 For fear I surfeit!

*Bassanio.* What find I here?

[*Opening the leaden casket.*]

115 Fair Portia's counterfeit! What demi-god  
 Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?  
 Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,  
 Seem they in motion? Here are sever'd lips,  
 Parted with sugar breath: so sweet a bar  
 120 Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs  
 The painter plays the spider, and hath woven  
 A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men,  
 Faster than gnats in cobwebs: but her eyes,—  
 How could he see to do them? having made one,  
 125 Methinks it should have power to steal both his,  
 And leave itself unfurnish'd. Yet look, how far  
 The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow  
 In underprizing it, so far this shadow  
 Doth limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll,  
 130 The continent and summary of my fortune.

[*Reads*] "You that choose not by the view,  
Chance as fair, and choose as true!  
Since this fortune falls to you,  
Be content, and seek no new.  
If you be well pleased with this, 135  
And hold your fortune for your bliss,  
Turn you where your lady is,  
And claim her with a loving kiss."

A gentle scroll.—Fair lady, by your leave; [*Kissing her*.  
I come by note, to give and to receive. 140  
Like one of two contending in a prize,  
That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,  
Hearing applause and universal shout,  
Giddy in spirit, still gazing, in a doubt  
Whether those peals of praise be his or no; 145  
So, thrice-fair lady, stand I, even so;  
As doubtful whether what I see be true,  
Until confirm'd, sign'd, ratified by you.

*Portia*. You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,  
Such as I am: though for myself alone 150  
I would not be ambitious in my wish,  
To wish myself much better; yet for you  
I would be trebled twenty times myself;  
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich;  
That, only to stand high in your account, 155  
I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,  
Exceed account; but the full sum of me  
Is sum of something; which, to term in gross,  
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised:  
Happy in this, she is not yet so old 160  
But she may learn; happier than this,  
She is not bred so dull but she can learn;  
Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit  
Commits itself to yours to be directed,  
As from her lord, her governor, her king. 165  
Myself and what is mine to you and yours  
Is now converted: but now I was the lord

Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,  
 Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,  
 170 This house, these servants, and this same myself,  
 Are yours, my lord: I give them with this ring;  
 Which when you part from, lose, or give away,  
 Let it presage the ruin of your love,  
 And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

175 *Bassanio.* Madam, you have bereft me of all words,  
 Only my blood speaks to you in my veins:  
 And there is such confusion in my powers,  
 As, after some oration fairly spoke  
 By a beloved prince, there doth appear  
 180 Among the buzzing pleased multitude;  
 Where every something, being blent together,  
 Turns to a wild of nothing, save of joy,  
 Express'd and not express'd. But when this ring  
 Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence:  
 185 O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!

*Nerissa.* My lord and lady, it is now our time,  
 That have stood by and seen our wishes prosper,  
 To cry, good joy: good joy, my lord and lady!

*Gratiano.* My lord Bassanio and my gentle lady,  
 190 I wish you all the joy that you can wish  
 For I am sure you can wish none from me:  
 And when your honours mean to solemnize  
 The bargain of your faith, I do beseech you,  
 Even at that time I may be married too.

195 *Bassanio.* With all my heart, so thou canst get a wife.

*Gratiano.* I thank your lordship, you have got me one.  
 My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours:  
 You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid;  
 You loved, I loved, for intermission  
 200 No more pertains to me, my lord, than you.  
 Your fortune stood upon the caskets there;  
 And so did mine too, as the matter falls;  
 For wooing here until I sweat again,  
 And swearing till my very roof was dry

With oaths of love, at last,—if promise last,— 205  
I got a promise of this fair one here,  
To have her love, provided that your fortune  
Achieved her mistress.

*Portia.* Is this true, Nerissa?

*Nerissa.* Madam, it is, so you stand pleased withal.

*Bassanio.* And do you, Gratiano, mean good faith? 210

*Gratiano.* Yes, faith, my lord.

*Bassanio.* Our feast shall be much honour'd in your  
marriage.

*Gra.* But who comes here? Lorenzo and his infidel?  
What, and my old Venetian friend Salerio?

*Enter LORENZO, JESSICA, and SALERIO.*

*Bassanio.* Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome hither; 215  
If that the youth of my new interest here  
Have power to bid you welcome. By your leave,  
I bid my very friends and countrymen,  
Sweet Portia, welcome.

*Portia.* So do I, my lord;  
They are entirely welcome. 220

*Lorenzo.* I thank your honour. For my part, my lord,  
My purpose was not to have seen you here;  
But meeting with Salerio by the way,  
He did entreat me, past all saying nay,  
To come with him along.

*Salerio.* I did, my lord; 225  
And I have reason for it. Signior Antonio  
Commends him to you. [*Gives Bassanio a letter.*

*Bassanio.* Ere I ope his letter,  
I pray you, tell me how my good friend doth.

*Salerio.* Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind;  
Nor well, unless in mind: his letter there 230  
Will show you his estate. [*Bassanio reads the letter.*

*Gra.* Nerissa, cheer yon stranger; bid her welcome.—  
Your hand, Salerio: what's the news from Venice?  
How doth that royal merchant, good Antonio?

235 I know he will be glad of our success;

We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece.

*Sal.* I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost!

*Portia.* There are some shrewd contents in yon same  
paper,

That steals the colour from Bassanio's cheek:

240 Some dear friend dead; else nothing in the world

Could turn so much the constitution

Of any constant man. What, worse and worse!—

With leave, Bassanio; I am half yourself,

And I must freely have the half of any thing

245 That this same paper brings you.

*Bassanio.* O sweet Portia,

Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words

That ever blotted paper! Gentle lady,

When I did first impart my love to you,

I freely told you all the wealth I had

250 Ran in my veins,—I was a gentleman;

And then I told you true: and yet, dear lady,

Rating myself at nothing, you shall see

How much I was a braggart. When I told you

My state was nothing, I should then have told you

255 That I was worse than nothing; for, indeed,

I have engaged myself to a dear friend,

Engaged my friend to his mere enemy,

To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady;

The paper as the body of my friend,

260 And every word in it a gaping wound,

Issuing life-blood.—But is it true, Salerio?

Have all his ventures fail'd? What, not one hit?

From Tripolis, from Mexico, and England,

From Lisbon, Barbary, and India?

265 And not one vessel scape the dreadful touch

Of merchant-marring rocks?

*Salerio.* Not one, my lord.

Besides, it should appear, that if he had

The present money to discharge the Jew,



He would not take it. Never did I know  
A creature, that did bear the shape of man, 270  
So keen and greedy to confound a man;  
He plies the duke at morning and at night;  
And doth impeach the freedom of the state,  
If they deny him justice: twenty merchants,  
The duke himself, and the magnificoes 275  
Of greatest port, have all persuaded with him:  
But none can drive him from the envious plea  
Of forfeiture, of justice, and his bond.

*Jes.* When I was with him, I have heard him swear  
To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen, 280  
That he would rather have Antonio's flesh  
Than twenty times the value of the sum  
That he did owe him: and I know, my lord,  
If law, authority, and power deny not,  
It will go hard with poor Antonio. 285

*Portia.* Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble?

*Bassanio.* The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,  
The best-condition'd and unwearied spirit  
In doing courtesies; and one in whom  
The ancient Roman honour more appears 290  
Than any that draws breath in Italy.

*Portia.* What sum owes he the Jew?

*Bass.* For me, three thousand ducats.

*Portia.* What, no more?

Pay him six thousand, and deface the bond;  
Double six thousand, and then treble that, 295  
Before a friend of this description  
Shall lose a hair through Bassanio's fault.  
First go with me to church and call me wife,  
And then away to Venice to your friend;  
For never shall you lie by Portia's side 300  
With an unquiet soul. You shall have gold  
To pay the petty debt twenty times over:  
When it is paid, bring your true friend along.  
My maid Nerissa and myself meantime

305 Will live as maids and widows. Come, away!  
 For you shall hence upon your wedding-day:  
 Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer:  
 Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.  
 But let me hear the letter of your friend.

310 *Bassanio.* [*Reads*] "Sweet Bassanio, my ships have  
 all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very  
 low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit; and since in paying it,  
 it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between  
 you and I, if I might but see you at my death. Notwith-  
 315 standing, use your pleasure: if your love do not persuade  
 you to come, let not my letter."

*Portia.* O love, dispatch all business, and be gone!

*Bassanio.* Since I have your good leave to go away,  
 I will make haste: but, till I come again,  
 320 No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay,  
 No rest be interposer 'twixt us twain.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *Venice. A street.*

*Enter SHYLOCK, SALARINO, ANTONIO, and Gaoler.*

*Shylock.* Gaoler, look to him: tell not me of mercy;  
 This is the fool that lent out money gratis:  
 Gaoler, look to him.

*Antonio.* Hear me yet, good Shylock.

*Shy.* I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond;  
 5 I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.  
 Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause;  
 But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs:  
 The duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,  
 Thou naughty gaoler, that thou art so fond  
 10 To come abroad with him at his request.

*Antonio.* I pray thee, hear me speak.

*Shy.* I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak:  
 I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more.  
 I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,  
 15 To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield

To Christian intercessors. Follow not;  
I'll have no speaking: I will have my bond.

[Exit.

*Salarino.* It is the most impenetrable cur  
That ever kept with men.

*Antonio.* Let him alone:  
I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers.  
He seeks my life; his reason well I know:  
I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures  
Many that have at times made moan to me:  
Therefore he hates me.

20

*Salarino.* I am sure the duke  
Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.

25

*Antonio.* The duke cannot deny the course of law:  
For the commodity that strangers have  
With us in Venice, if it be denied,  
Will much impeach the justice of the state;  
Since that the trade and profit of the city  
Consisteth of all nations. Therefore, go:  
These griefs and losses have so bated me,  
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh  
To-morrow to my bloody creditor.  
Well, gaoler, on. Pray God, Bassanio come  
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not!

30

[Exit.

SCENE IV. *Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.*

*Enter PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA,  
and BALTHAZAR.*

*Lor.* Madam, although I speak it in your presence,  
You have a noble and a true conceit  
Of god-like amity; which appears most strongly  
In bearing thus the absence of your lord.  
But if you knew to whom you show this honour,  
How true a gentleman you send relief,  
How dear a lover of my lord your husband,  
I know you would be prouder of the work  
Than customary bounty can enforce you.

5

- 10 *Portia.* I never did repent for doing good,  
Nor shall not now: for in companions  
That do converse and waste the time together,  
Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,  
There must be needs a like proportion  
15 Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit;  
Which makes me think that this Antonio,  
Being the bosom lover of my lord,  
Must needs be like my lord. If it be so,  
How little is the cost I have bestow'd  
20 In purchasing the semblance of my soul  
From out the state of hellish cruelty!  
This comes too near the praising of myself;  
Therefore no more of it: hear other things.  
Lorenzo, I commit into your hands  
25 The husbandry and manage of my house  
Until my lord's return: for mine own part,  
I have toward heaven breathed a secret vow  
To live in prayer and contemplation,  
Only attended by Nerissa here,  
30 Until her husband and my lord's return:  
There is a monastery two miles off;  
And there will we abide. I do desire you  
Not to deny this imposition:  
The which my love and some necessity  
35 Now lays upon you.

*Lorenzo.* Madam, with all my heart;  
I shall obey you in all fair commands.

*Portia.* My people do already know my mind,  
And will acknowledge you and Jessica  
In place of Lord Bassanio and myself.

- 40 And so farewell, till we shall meet again.

*Lor.* Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you!

*Jessica.* I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

*Por.* I thank you for your wish, and am well pleased  
To wish it back on you: fare you well, Jessica.

[*Exeunt Jessica and Lorenzo.*]

Now, Balthazar,  
As I have ever found thee honest-true, 45  
So let me find thee still. Take this same letter,  
And use thou all the endeavour of a man  
In speed to Padua: see thou render this  
Into my cousin's hand, Doctor Bellario; 50  
And, look, what notes and garments he doth give thee,  
Bring them, I pray thee, with imagined speed  
Unto the tranect, to the common ferry  
Which trades to Venice. Waste no time in words,  
But get thee gone: I shall be there before thee. 55  
*Balthazar.* Madam, I go with all convenient speed.

[Exit.

*Portia.* Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand  
That you yet know not of: we'll see our husbands  
Before they think of us.

*Nerissa.* Shall they see us?

*Portia.* They shall, Nerissa; but in such a habit, 60  
That they shall think we are accomplished  
With that we lack. I'll hold thee any wager,  
When we are both accoutred like young men,  
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,  
And wear my dagger with the braver grace; 65  
And speak between the change of man and boy  
With a reed voice; and turn two mincing steps  
Into a manly stride; and speak of frays,  
Like a fine bragging youth; and tell quaint lies,  
How honourable ladies sought my love, 70  
Which I denying, they fell sick and died;  
I could not do withal; then I'll repent,  
And wish, for all that, that I had not kill'd them:  
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell;  
That men shall swear I have discontinued school 75  
Above a twelvemonth: I have within my mind  
A thousand raw tricks of these bragging jacks,  
Which I will practise.  
But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device

80 When I am in my coach, which stays for us  
 At the park-gate; and therefore haste away,  
 For we must measure twenty miles to-day. [Exeunt.]

SCENE V. *The same. A garden.*

*Enter LAUNCELOT and JESSICA.*

*Launcelot.* Yes, truly; for, look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children: therefore, I promise you, I fear you. I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter: therefore  
 5 be of good cheer; for, truly, I think you are damned.

*Jessica.* I shall be saved by my husband; he hath made me a Christian.

*Launcelot.* Truly, the more to blame he: we were Christians enow before; e'en as many as could well live,  
 10 one by another. This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs; if we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money.

*Jessica.* I'll tell my husband, Launcelot, what you say: here he comes.

*Enter LORENZO.*

15 *Lorenzo.* I shall grow jealous of you shortly, Launcelot, if you thus get my wife into corners.

*Jessica.* Nay, you need not fear us, Lorenzo: Launcelot and I are out. He tells me flatly, there is no mercy for me in heaven, because I am a Jew's daughter: and he  
 20 says, you are no good member of the commonwealth, for in converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork.

*Lorenzo.* [To Launcelot] Go in, sirrah; bid them prepare for dinner.

25 *Launcelot.* That is done, sir; they have all stomachs.

*Lorenzo.* Goodly Lord, what a wit-snapper are you! then bid them prepare dinner.

*Launcelot.* That is done too, sir; only "cover" is the word.

30 *Lorenzo.* Will you cover, then, sir?

*Launcelot.* Not so, sir, neither; I know my duty.

*Lorenzo.* Yet more quarrelling with occasion! Wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant? I pray thee, understand a plain man in his plain meaning: go to thy fellows, bid them cover the table, serve in the 35 meat, and we will come in to dinner.

*Launcelot.* For the table, sir, it shall be served in; for the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in to dinner, sir, why, let it be as humours and conceits shall govern. [Exit. 40

*Lorenzo.* O dear discretion, how his words are suited! The fool hath planted in his memory  
An army of good words; and I do know  
A many fools, that stand in better place,  
Garnish'd like him, that for a tricky word 45  
Defy the matter.—How cheer'st thou, Jessica?  
And now, good sweet, say thy opinion,  
How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio's wife?

*Jessica.* Past all expressing. It is very meet  
The Lord Bassanio live an upright life; 50  
For, having such a blessing in his lady,  
He finds the joys of heaven here on earth;  
And if on earth he do not mean it, then  
In reason he should never come to heaven.  
Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match, 55  
And on the wager lay two earthly women,  
And Portia one, there must be something else  
Pawn'd with the other; for the poor rude world  
Hath not her fellow.

*Lorenzo.* Even such a husband  
Hast thou of me as she is for a wife. 60

*Jessica.* Nay, but ask my opinion too of that.

*Lorenzo.* I will anon: first, let us go to dinner.

*Jes.* Nay, let me praise you while I have a stomach.

*Lorenzo.* No, pray thee, let it serve for table-talk;  
Then, howsoever thou speak'st, 'mong other things 65  
I shall digest it.

*Jessica.* Well, I'll set you forth. [Exeunt

## ACT IV.

SCENE I. *Venice. A court of justice.*

*Enter the Duke, the Magnificoes, ANTONIO, BASSANIO,  
GRATIANO, SALERIO, and others.*

*Duke.* What, is Antonio here?

*Antonio.* Ready, so please your grace.

*Duke.* I am sorry for thee: thou art come to answer  
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch  
5 Uncapable of pity, void and empty  
From any dram of mercy.

*Antonio.* I have heard  
Your grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify  
His rigorous course; but since he stands obdurate,  
And that no lawful means can carry me  
10 Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose  
My patience to his fury, and am arm'd  
To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,  
The very tyranny and rage of his.

*Duke.* Go one, and call the Jew into the court.

15 *Salerio.* He's ready at the door: he comes, my lord.

*Enter SHYLOCK.*

*Duke.* Make room, and let him stand before our face.—  
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,  
That thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice  
To the last hour of act; and then 'tis thought  
20 Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange  
Than is thy strange apparent cruelty;  
And where thou now exact'st the penalty,  
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,  
Thou wilt not only loose the forfeiture,  
25 But, touch'd with human gentleness and love,  
Forgive a moiety of the principal;  
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,



That have of late so huddled on his back,  
Enow to press a royal merchant down,  
And pluck commiseration of his state 30  
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,  
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd  
'To offices of tender courtesy.

We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

*Shy.* I have possess'd your grace of what I purpose; 35  
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn  
To have the due and forfeit of my bond:  
If you deny it, let the danger light  
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.  
You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have 40  
A weight of carrion flesh than to receive  
Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that;  
But, say, it is my humour: is it answer'd?  
What if my house be troubled with a rat,  
And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats 45  
To have it baned! What, are you answer'd yet?  
Some men there are love not a gaping pig;  
Some, that are mad if they behold a cat;  
And others, when the bag-pipe sings i' the nose,  
Cannot contain [themselves]: for affection, 50  
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood  
Of what it likes or loathes. Now, for your answer:  
As there is no firm reason to be render'd,  
Why he cannot abide a gaping pig;  
Why he, a harmless necessary cat; 55  
Why he, a woollen bag-pipe; but of force  
Must yield to such inevitable shame  
As to offend, himself being offended;  
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,  
More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing 56  
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus  
A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd?

*Bassanio.* This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,  
To excuse the current of thy cruelty.

65 *Shy.* I am not bound to please thee with my answer.

*Bass.* Do all men kill the things they do not love?

*Shylock.* Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

*Bassanio.* Every offence is not a hate at first.

*Shylock.* What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

70 *Ant.* I pray you, think you question with the Jew:

You may as well go stand upon the beach,

And bid the main flood bate his usual height;

You may as well use question with the wolf,

Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb;

75 You may as well forbid the mountain pines

To wag their high tops and to make no noise,

When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven;

You may as well do any thing most hard,

As seek to soften that,—than which what's harder?—

80 His Jewish heart: therefore, I do beseech you,

Make no more offers, use no further means,

But with all brief and plain conveniency

Let me have judgment, and the Jew his will.

*Bassanio.* For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

85 *Shylock.* If every ducat in six thousand ducats

Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,

I would not draw them; I would have my bond.

*Duke.* Howshalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

*Shy.* What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?

90 You have among you many a purchased slave,

Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,

You use in abject and in slavish parts,

Because you bought them: shall I say to you,

Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?

95 Why sweat they under burdens? let their beds

Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates

Be season'd with such viands? You will answer,

The slaves are ours: so do I answer you:

The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,

100 Is dearly bought; 'tis mine, and I will have it.

If you deny me, fie upon your law!  
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.  
I stand for judgment: answer,—shall I have it?

*Duke.* Upon my power I may dismiss this court,  
Unless Bellario, a learned doctor,  
Whom I have sent for to determine this,  
Come here to-day. 105

*Salerio.* My lord, here stays without  
A messenger with letters from the doctor,  
New come from Padua.

*Duke.* Bring us the letters; call the messenger. 110

*Bass.* Good cheer, Antonio! What, man, courage yet!  
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all,  
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

*Antonio.* I am a tainted wether of the flock,  
Meetest for death: the weakest kind of fruit  
Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me:  
You cannot better be employ'd, Bassanio,  
Than to live still, and write mine epitaph.

*Enter NERISSA, dressed like a lawyer's clerk.*

*Duke.* Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

*Ner.* From both, my lord. Bellario greets your grace. 120

[Presents a letter.]

*Bassanio.* Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

*Shylock.* To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

*Gra.* Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew,  
Thou makest thy knife keen; but no metal can,  
No, not the hangman's axe, bear half the keenness  
Of thy sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce thee? 125

*Shy.* No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

*Graiano.* O, be thou damn'd, execrable dog!  
And for thy life let justice be accused.  
Thou almost makest me waver in my faith,  
To hold opinion with Pythagoras, 130  
That souls of animals infuse themselves  
Into the trunks of men: thy currish spirit

Govern'd a wolf, who, hang'd for human slaughter,  
135 Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,  
And, whilst thou lay'st in thy unhallow'd dam,  
Infused itself in thee; for thy desires  
Are wolfish, bloody, starved and ravenous.

*Shy.* Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,  
140 Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud:  
Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall  
To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.

*Duke.* This letter from Bellario doth commend  
A young and learned doctor to our court.  
145 Where is he?

*Nerissa.* He attendeth here hard by,  
To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

*Duke.* With all my heart.—Some three or four of you  
Go give him courteous conduct to this place.—  
Meantime the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

150 *Clerk.* [*Reads*] "Your grace shall understand, that at  
the receipt of your letter I am very sick: but in the  
instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was  
with me a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthazar.  
I acquainted him with the cause in controversy between  
155 the Jew and Antonio the merchant: we turned o'er many  
books together: he is furnished with my opinion; which,  
bettered with his own learning, the greatness whereof I  
cannot enough commend, comes with him, at my im-  
portunity, to fill up your grace's request in my stead. I  
160 beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to  
let him lack a reverend estimation; for I never knew so  
young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your  
gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his  
commendation."

165 *Duke.* You hear the learn'd Bellario, what he writes:  
And here, I take it, is the doctor come.

*Enter PORTIA, dressed like a doctor of laws.*

Give me your hand. Come you from old Bellario?

*Portia.* I did, my lord.

*Duke.* You are welcome: take your place.

Are you acquainted with the difference

That holds this present question in the court? 170

*Portia.* I am informed thoroughly of the cause.

Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

*Duke.* Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

*Portia.* Is your name Shylock?

*Shylock.* Shylock is my name.

*Portia.* Of a strange nature is the suit you follow; 175

Yet in such rule, that the Venetian law

Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.—

[*To Antonio*] You stand within his danger, do you not?

*Antonio.* Ay, so he says.

*Portia.* Do you confess the bond?

*Antonio.* I do.

*Portia.* Then must the Jew be merciful. 180

*Shylock.* On what compulsion must I? tell me that.

*Portia.* The quality of mercy is not strain'd,

✓ It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes: ✓ 185

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes

The throned monarch better than his crown;

His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,

The attribute to awe and majesty,

Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings; 190

But mercy is above this sceptred sway;

It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,

It is an attribute to God himself;

And earthly power doth then show likest God's

When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew, 195

Though justice be thy plea, consider this,

That, in the course of justice, none of us

Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;

And that same prayer doth teach us all to render

The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much 200

To mitigate the justice of thy plèa;  
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice  
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

*Shylock.* My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,  
205 The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

*Portia.* Is he not able to discharge the money?

*Bassanio.* Yes, here I tender it for him in the court;  
Yea, twice the sum: if that will not suffice,  
I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,  
210 On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart:  
If this will not suffice, it must appear  
That malice bears down truth. And I beseech you,  
Wrest once the law to your authority:

✓To do a great right, do a little wrong,  
215 And curb this cruel devil of his will.

*Portia.* It must not be; there is no power in Venice  
Can alter a decree established:

'Twill be recorded for a precedent,  
And many an error, by the same example,  
220 Will rush into the state: it cannot be.

*Shylock.* A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a Daniel!  
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!

*Portia.* I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

*Shylock.* Here 'tis, most reverend doctor, here it is.

225 *Portia.* Shylock, there's thrice thy money offer'd thee.

*Shylock.* An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven:  
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?  
No, not for Venice.

*Portia.* Why, this bond is forfeit;  
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim  
230 A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off

Nearest the merchant's heart. Be merciful:

Take thrice thy money; bid me tear the bond.

*Shylock.* When it is paid according to the tenour.  
It doth appear you are a worthy judge;  
235 You know the law, your exposition  
Hath been most sound: I charge you by the law,

Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar,  
Proceed to judgment: by my soul I swear  
There is no power in the tongue of man  
To alter me: I stay here on my bond. 240

*Antonio.* Most heartily I do beseech the court  
To give the judgment.

*Portia.* Why then thus it is:  
You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

*Shylock.* O noble judge! O excellent young man!

*Portia.* For the intent and purpose of the law 245  
Hath full relation to the penalty,  
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

*Shylock.* 'Tis very true: O wise and upright judge!  
How much more elder art thou than thy looks!

*Portia.* Therefore lay bare your bosom.

*Shylock.* Ay, his breast: 250  
So says the bond: doth it not, noble judge?

"Nearest his heart:" those are the very words.

*Portia.* It is so. Are there balance here to weigh  
The flesh?

*Shylock.* I have them ready.

*Portia.* Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your  
charge, 255  
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.

*Shylock.* Is it so nominated in the bond?

*Portia.* It is not so express'd: but what of that?  
'Twere good you do so much for charity.

*Shylock.* I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond. 260

*Portia.* Come, merchant, have you any thing to say?

*Antonio.* But little: I am arm'd and well prepared.—  
Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!  
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you;  
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind 265  
Than is her custom: it is still her use  
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,  
To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow  
An age of poverty; from which lingering penance

- 270 Of such misery doth she cut me off.  
Commend me to your honourable wife:  
Tell her the process of Antonio's end;  
Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death;  
And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge  
275 Whether Bassanio had not once a love.  
Repent not you that you shall lose your friend,  
And he repents not that he pays your debt;  
For, if the Jew do cut but deep enough,  
I'll pay it instantly with all my heart.
- 280 *Bassanio.* Antonio, I am married to a wife  
Which is as dear to me as life itself;  
But life itself, my wife, and all the world  
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life:  
I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all  
285 Here to this devil, to deliver you.  
*Portia.* Your wife would give you little thanks for that,  
If she were by, to hear you make the offer.  
*Gratiano.* I have a wife, whom, I protest, I love:  
I would she were in heaven, so she could  
290 Entreat some power to change this currish Jew.  
*Nerissa.* 'Tis well you offer it behind her back;  
The wish would make else an unquiet house.  
*Shylock.* These be the Christian husbands! I have a  
daughter,—  
Would any of the stock of Barrabas  
295 Had been her husband rather than a Christian!— [*Aside.*  
We trifle time: I pray thee, pursue sentence.  
*Portia.* A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine;  
The court awards it, and the law doth give it.  
*Shylock.* Most rightful judge!
- 300 *Portia.* And you must cut this flesh from off his breast:  
The law allows it, and the court awards it.  
*Shylock.* Most learned judge!—A sentence!—Come,  
prepare!  
*Portia.* Tarry a little; there is something else.  
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;



The words expressly are "a pound of flesh:" 305

Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;

But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed

One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods

Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate

Unto the state of Venice. 310

*Gra.* Oupright judge!—Mark, Jew:—O learned judge!

*Shylock.* Is that the law?

*Portia.* Thyself shalt see the Act:

For, as thou urgest justice, be assured

Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest.

*Gra.* O learned judge!—Mark, Jew: a learned judge! 315

*Shylock.* I take this offer, then; pay the bond thrice,

And let the Christian go.

*Bassanio.* Here is the money.

*Portia.* Soft!

The Jew shall have all justice; soft! no haste:

He shall have nothing but the penalty. 320

*Gratiano.* O Jew! an upright judge, a learned judge!

*Portia.* Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.

Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more

But just a pound of flesh: if thou cut'st more

Or less than a just pound,—be it but so much 325

As makes it light or heavy in the substance

Or the division of the twentieth part

Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn

But in the estimation of a hair,—

Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate. 330

*Gratiano.* A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew!

Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip.

*Portia.* Why doth the Jew pause? take thy forfeiture.

*Shylock.* Give me my principal, and let me go.

*Bassanio.* I have it ready for thee; here it is. 335

*Portia.* He hath refused it in the open court:

He shall have merely justice and his bond.

*Gratiano.* A Daniel, still say I, a second Daniel!—

I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

340 *Shylock*. Shall I not have barely my principal?

*Portia*. Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture,  
To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.

*Shylock*. Why, then the devil give him good of it!  
I'll stay no longer question.

*Portia*. Tarry, Jew:

345 The law hath yet another hold on you.

It is enacted in the laws of Venice,  
If it be proved against an alien  
That by direct or indirect attempts  
He seek the life of any citizen,

350 The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive  
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half  
Comes to the privy coffer of the state;  
And the offender's life lies in the mercy  
Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice.

355 In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st;  
For it appears, by manifest proceeding,  
That indirectly and directly too  
Thou hast contrived against the very life  
Of the defendant; and thou hast incurr'd

360 The danger formerly by me rehearsed.  
Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the duke.

*Gratiano*. Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang  
thyself:

And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,  
Thou hast not left the value of a cord;

365 Therefore thou must be hang'd at the state's charge.

*Duke*. That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit,  
I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it:  
For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's;  
The other half comes to the general state,

370 Which humbleness may drive unto a fine.

*Portia*. Ay, for the state, not for Antonio.

*Shylock*. Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:  
You take my house when you do take the prop  
That doth sustain my house; you take my life

When you do take the means whereby I live. 375

*Portia.* What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

*Gratiano.* A halter gratis; nothing else, for God's sake.

*Antonio.* So please my lord the duke and all the court  
To quit the fine for one half of his goods,

I am content; so he will let me have 380

The other half in use, to render it,

Upon his death, unto the gentleman

That lately stole his daughter:

Two things provided more,—that, for this favour,

He presently become a Christian; 385

The other, that he do record a gift,

Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd,

Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

*Duke.* He shall do this, or else I do recant  
The pardon that I late pronounced here. 390

*Portia.* Art thou contented, Jew? what dost thou say?

*Shylock.* I am content.

*Portia.* Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

*Shylock.* I pray you, give me leave to go from hence;  
I am not well: send the deed after me,  
And I will sign it.

*Duke.* Get thee gone, but do it. 395

*Gratiano.* In christening shalt thou have two god-  
fathers:

Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more,  
To bring thee to the gallows, not the font.

[*Exit Shylock.*

*Duke.* Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner.

*Portia.* I humbly do desire your grace of pardon: 400  
I must away this night toward Padua,  
And it is meet I presently set forth.

*Duke.* I am sorry that your leisure serves you not.—  
Antonio, gratify this gentleman;  
For, in my mind, you are much bound to him. 405

[*Exeunt Duke, Magnificoes, and Train.*

*Bassanio.* Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend

Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted  
Of grievous penalties; in lieu whereof,  
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew,  
410 We freely cope your courteous pains withal.

*Antonio.* And stand indebted, over and above,  
In love and service to you evermore.

*Portia.* He is well paid that is well satisfied;  
And I, delivering you, am satisfied,  
415 And therein do account myself well paid:  
My mind was never yet more mercenary.  
I pray you, know me when we meet again:  
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

*Bassanio.* Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further:  
420 Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute,  
Not as a fee: grant me two things, I pray you,  
Not to deny me, and to pardon me.

*Portia.* You press me far, and therefore I will yield.

[*To Antonio*] Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for  
your sake;  
425 [*To Bassanio*] And, for your love, I'll take this ring from  
you:

Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more,  
And you in love shall not deny me this.

*Bassanio.* This ring, good sir, alas, it is a trifle!  
I will not shame myself to give you this.

430 *Portia.* I will have nothing else but only this;  
And now methinks I have a mind to it.

*Bass.* There's more depends on this than on the value.  
The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,  
And find it out by proclamation:

435 Only for this, I pray you, pardon me.

*Portia.* I see, sir, you are liberal in offers:  
You taught me first to beg; and now methinks  
You teach me how a beggar should be answer'd.

*Bass.* Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife;  
440 And when she put it on, she made me vow  
That I should neither sell nor give nor lose it.

*Portia.* That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.  
 An if your wife be not a mad-woman,  
 And know how well I have deserved the ring,  
 She would not hold out enemy for ever, 445  
 For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you!

[*Exeunt Portia and Nerissa.*]

*Antonio.* My lord Bassanio, let him have the ring:  
 Let his deservings and my love withal  
 Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment.

*Bassanio.* Go, Gratiano, run and overtake him; 450  
 Give him the ring; and bring him, if thou canst,  
 Unto Antonio's house: away! make haste. [*Exit Gratiano.*]  
 Come, you and I will thither presently;  
 And in the morning early will we both  
 Fly toward Belmont: come, Antonio. [*Exeunt.* 455]

SCENE II. *The same. A street.*

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA, disguised as before.*

*Por.* Inquire the Jew's house out, give him this deed,  
 And let him sign it: we'll away to-night,  
 And be a day before our husbands home:  
 This deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo.

*Enter GRATIANO.*

*Gratiano.* Fair sir, you are well o'erta'en: 5  
 My Lord Bassanio, upon more advice,  
 Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat  
 Your company at dinner.

*Portia.* That cannot be:  
 His ring I do accept most thankfully;  
 And so, I pray you, tell him: furthermore, 10  
 I pray you, show my youth old Shylock's house.

*Gra.* That will I do.

*Nerissa.* Sir, I would speak with you.—  
 [*Aside to Portia*] I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,  
 Which I did make him swear to keep for ever.

- 15 *Por.* [*Aside to Ner.*] Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall  
have old swearing  
That they did give the rings away to men;  
But we'll outface them, and outswear them too.  
[*Aloud*] Away! make haste: thou know'st where I will tarry.  
*Ner.* Come, good sir, will you show me to this house?  
[*Exeunt.*]

## ACT V.

SCENE I. *Belmont. Avenue to PORTIA'S house.**Enter LORENZO and JESSICA.*

*Lor.* The moon shines bright: in such a night as this,  
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,  
And they did make no noise, in such a night  
Troilus methinks mounted the Troyan walls,  
5 And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,  
Where Cressid lay that night.

*Jessica.* In such a night  
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,  
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,  
And ran dismay'd away.

*Lorenzo.* In such a night  
10 Stood Dido with a willow in her hand  
Upon the wild sea banks, and waft her love  
To come again to Carthage.

*Jessica.* In such a night  
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs  
That did renew old Æson.

*Lorenzo.* In such a night  
15 Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,  
And with an unthrift love did run from Venice  
As far as Belmont.

*Jessica.* In such a night  
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,  
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,  
20 And ne'er a true one.

*Lorenzo.* In such a night

Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,  
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.

*Jessica.* I would out-night you, did no body come;  
But, hark, I hear the footing of a man.

*Enter STEPHANO.*

*Lorenzo.* Who comes so fast in silence of the night? 25

*Stephano.* A friend.

*Lorenzo.* A friend! what friend? your name, I pray  
you, friend?

*Stephano.* Stephano is my name; and I bring word  
My mistress will before the break of day  
Be here at Belmont: she doth stray about 30  
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays  
For happy wedlock hours.

*Lorenzo.* Who comes with her?

*Stephano.* None but a holy hermit and her maid.  
I pray you, is my master yet return'd?

*Lorenzo.* He is not, nor we have not heard from him.— 35  
But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,  
And ceremoniously let us prepare  
Some welcome for the mistress of the house.

*Enter LAUNCELOT.*

*Launcelot.* Sola, sola! wo ha, ho! sola, sola!

*Lorenzo.* Who calls? 40

*Launcelot.* Sola! did you see Master Lorenzo? Master  
Lorenzo, sola, sola!

*Lorenzo.* Leave hollaing, man: here.

*Launcelot.* Sola! where? where?

*Lorenzo.* Here. 45

*Launcelot.* Tell him there's a post come from my  
master, with his horn full of good news: my master will  
be here ere morning. *[Exit.]*

*Lor.* Sweet soul, let's in, and there expect their coming.  
And yet no matter: why should we go in? 50  
My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,

- Within the house, your mistress is at hand;  
And bring your music forth into the air. [*Exit Stephano.*]  
How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
55 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
Sit, Jessica. Look, how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:  
60 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
65 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

*Enter Musicians.*

- Come, ho, and wake Diana with a hymn!  
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,  
And draw her home with music. [*Music.*]  
*Jessica.* I am never merry when I hear sweet music.  
70 *Lorenzo.* The reason is, your spirits are attentive:  
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,  
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,  
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,  
Which is the hot condition of their blood;  
75 If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,  
Or any air of music touch their ears,  
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,  
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze  
By the sweet power of music: therefore the poet  
80 Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;  
Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,  
But music for the time doth change his nature.  
The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
85 Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,



And his affections dark as Erebus:  
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA.*

*Portia.* That light we see is burning in my hall.  
How far that little candle throws his beams! 90  
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

*Nerissa.* When the moon shone, we did not see the  
candle.

*Portia.* So doth the greater glory dim the less:  
A substitute shines brightly as a king,  
Until a king be by; and then his state 95  
Empties itself, as doth an inland brook  
Into the main of waters. Music! hark!

*Nerissa.* It is your music, madam, of the house.

*Portia.* Nothing is good, I see, without respect:  
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day. 100

*Nerissa.* Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

*Portia.* The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark,  
When neither is attended; and I think  
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,  
When every goose is cackling, would be thought 105  
No better a musician than the wren.  
How many things by season season'd are  
To their right praise and true perfection!  
Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion,  
And would not be awaked. [*Music ceases.*]

*Lorenzo.* That is the voice, 110  
Or I am much deceived, of Portia.

*Por.* He knows me, as the blind man knows the cuckoo,  
By the bad voice.

*Lorenzo.* Dear lady, welcome home.

*Portia.* We have been praying for our husbands'  
healths,  
Which speed, we hope, the better for our words. 115  
Are they return'd?

*Lorenzo.* Madam, they are not yet;

But there is come a messenger before,  
To signify their coming.

*Portia.* Go in, Nerissa;  
Give order to my servants that they take  
120 No note at all of our being absent hence;  
Nor you, Lorenzo; Jessica, nor you. [*A tucket sounds.*]  
*Lor.* Your husband is at hand; I hear his trumpet:  
We are no tell-tales, madam; fear you not.

*Portia.* This night methinks is but the daylight sick;  
125 It looks a little paler: 'tis a day,  
Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

*Enter BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, and their Followers.*

*Bassanio.* We should hold day with the Antipodes,  
If you would walk in absence of the sun.

*Portia.* Let me give light, but let me not be light;  
130 For a light wife doth make a heavy husband,  
And never be Bassanio so for me:  
But God sort all! You are welcome home, my lord.

*Bassanio.* I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my  
friend:

This is the man, this is Antonio,  
135 To whom I am so infinitely bound.

*Por.* You should in all sense be much bound to him,  
For, as I hear, he was much bound for you.

*Antonio.* No more than I am well acquitted of.

*Portia.* Sir, you are very welcome to our house:  
140 It must appear in other ways than words,  
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.

*Gratiano.* [*To Nerissa*] By yonder moon I swear you  
do me wrong;

In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk:

Would he were dead that had it, for my part,  
145 Since you do take it, love, so much to heart.

*Portia.* A quarrel, ho, already! what's the matter?

*Gratiano.* About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring  
That she did give me, whose posy was

For all the world like cutler's poetry  
Upon a knife, "Love me, and leave me not." 150

*Nerissa.* What talk you of the posy or the value?  
You swore to me, when I did give it you,  
That you would wear it till your hour of death,  
And that it should lie with you in your grave:  
Though not for me, yet for your vehement oaths, 155  
You should have been respective and have kept it.  
Gave it a judge's clerk! no, God's my judge,  
The clerk will ne'er wear hair on's face that had it.

*Gratiano.* He will, an if he live to be a man.

*Nerissa.* Ay, if a woman live to be a man. 160

*Gratiano.* Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,  
A kind of boy, a little scrubbed boy,  
No higher than thyself, the judge's clerk;  
A prating boy, that begg'd it as a fee:  
I could not for my heart deny it him. 165

*Portia.* You were to blame, I must be plain with you,  
To part so slightly with your wife's first gift;  
A thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger,  
And so riveted with faith unto your flesh.  
I gave my love a ring, and made him swear 170  
Never to part with it; and here he stands;  
I dare be sworn for him, he would not leave it  
Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth  
That the world masters. Now, in faith, Gratiano,  
You give your wife too unkind a cause of grief: 175  
An 'twere to me, I should be mad at it.

*Bass.* [*Aside*] Why, I were best to cut my left hand off,  
And swear I lost the ring defending it.

*Gratiano.* My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away  
Unto the judge that begg'd it, and indeed 180  
Deserved it too; and then the boy, his clerk,  
That took some pains in writing, he begg'd mine:  
And neither man nor master would take aught  
But the two rings.

*Portia.* What ring gave you, my lord?

185 Not that, I hope, which you received of me.

*Bassanio.* If I could add a lie unto a fault,  
I would deny it; but you see my finger  
Hath not the ring upon it; it is gone.

*Portia.* Even so void is your false heart of truth.  
190 By heaven, I will never be your wife  
Until I see the ring.

*Nerissa.* Nor I be yours  
Till I again see mine.

*Bassanio.* Sweet Portia,  
If you did know to whom I gave the ring,  
If you did know for whom I gave the ring,  
195 And would conceive for what I gave the ring,  
And how unwillingly I left the ring,  
When naught would be accepted but the ring,  
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

*Portia.* If you had known the virtue of the ring,  
200 Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,  
Or your own honour to contain the ring,  
You would not then have parted with the ring.  
What man is there so much unreasonable,  
If you had pleased to have defended it  
205 With any terms of zeal, wanted the modesty  
To urge the thing held as a ceremony?  
Nerissa teaches me what to believe:  
I'll die for't but some woman had the ring.

*Bassanio.* No, by mine honour, madam, by my soul,  
210 No woman had it, but a civil doctor,  
Which did refuse three thousand ducats of me,  
And begg'd the ring; the which I did deny him,  
And suffer'd him to go displeased away;  
Even he that had held up the very life  
215 Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?  
I was enforced to send it after him:  
I was beset with shame and courtesies;  
My honour would not let ingratitude  
So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady;

For, by these blessed candles of the night, 220  
Had you been there, I think, you would have begg'd  
The ring of me to give the worthy doctor.

*Portia.* Let not that doctor e'er come near my house:  
Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,  
And that which you did swear to keep for me, 225  
I will become as liberal as you;  
I'll not deny him any thing I have.

*Nerissa.* [*To Gratiano*] Nor I his clerk; therefore be  
well advised  
How you do leave me to mine own protection.

*Antonio.* I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels. 230

*Portia.* Sir, grieve not you; you are welcome notwithstanding.

*Bassanio.* Portia, forgive me this enforced wrong;  
And, in the hearing of these many friends,  
I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes,  
Wherein I see myself,—

*Portia.* Mark you but that! 235  
In both my eyes he doubly sees himself;  
In each eye, one: swear by your double self,  
And there's an oath of credit.

*Bassanio.* Nay, but hear me:  
Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear  
I never more will break an oath with thee. 240

*Antonio.* I once did lend my body for his wealth;  
Which, but for him that had your husband's ring,  
Had quite miscarried: I dare be bound again,  
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord  
Will never more break faith advisedly. 245

*Portia.* Then you shall be his surety. Give him this;  
And bid him keep it better than the other.

*Ant.* Here, Lord Bassanio; swear to keep this ring.

*Bass.* By heaven, it is the same I gave the doctor!

*Portia.* I had it of him: pardon me, Bassanio.

*Nerissa.* And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano;  
For that same scrubbed boy, the doctor's clerk,

Did give me this.

*Portia.* You're all amazed:  
Here is a letter, read it at your leisure;  
255 It comes from Padua, from Bellario:  
There you shall find that Portia was the doctor;  
Nerissa there her clerk; Lorenzo here  
Shall witness I set forth as soon as you,  
And even but now return'd; I have not yet  
260 Enter'd my house. Antonio, you are welcome;  
And I have better news in store for you  
Than you expect: unseal this letter soon;  
There you shall find three of your argosies  
Are richly come to harbour suddenly:  
265 You shall not know by what strange accident  
I chanced on this letter.

*Antonio.* I am dumb.

*Bassiano.* Were you the doctor, and I knew you not?

*Gratiano.* Were you the clerk?

*Ant.* Sweet lady, you have given me life and living;  
270 For here I read for certain that my ships  
Are safely come to road.

*Portia.* How now, Lorenzo!  
My clerk hath some good comforts too for you.

*Nerissa.* Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee.  
There do I give to you and Jessica,  
275 From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,  
After his death, of all he dies possess'd of.

*Lorenzo.* Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way  
Of starved people.

*Portia.* It is almost morning,  
And yet I am sure you are not satisfied  
280 Of these events at full. Let us go in;  
And charge us there upon inter'gatories,  
And we will answer all things faithfully.

*Gratiano.* Let it be so.

Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing  
285 So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.

[*Exeunt.*]

## NOTES

G. = *Glossary*. Several other abbreviations used sometimes in the *Notes* are explained at the beginning of the *Glossary*, in which they occur more frequently. They should be observed; see p. 153.

By "the Folio" is meant the 1st Folio Edition of Shakespeare's plays, published in 1623.

### ACT I

#### SCENE I

The opening scene is remarkable for the rapidity with which the piece gets under way, the clearness of characterisation, and, above all, the linking together of the two stories which make up the main action, viz. the Bond-story and the Caskets-story. There is very little explanation as to what is supposed to have preceded. The brief conversation between Antonio and Bassanio brings out vividly their close relations and the present fortune of each. Henceforth we know them (and Gratiano). And we learn how Bassanio's "pilgrimage to Belmont" is to be the occasion of Antonio incurring the debt on which so much hinges.

1. *I know not why I am so sad*. Critics agree that Antonio's "sadness" is intended to strike the keynote of his misfortunes, but disagree as to its cause. One view is that Shakespeare means us to see in it an illustration of the feeling that "coming events cast their shadows before"; cf. Shylock's forebodings in II. 5. 16-18. Another view is that the mood is attributed to Antonio purely for dramatic effect, as though a dramatist had the right to arrange the outset in such a way as best to contrast or harmonise with what follows. But perhaps the cause lies in Antonio's innate tendency to sadness (78, 79), and to more than one occasion of present anxiety. Thus, though he denies that business "makes him sad" (45), yet his position is clearly (177-9) one which may well make him anxious, and perhaps does, unconsciously; moreover his denial is somewhat discounted by the fact that he is speaking to those with whom he would not care to be quite so confidential as with his close friend Bassanio. Then again knowledge of Bassanio's difficulties (122-34) may be another source of gloom. Perhaps too "the prospect of losing his friend (119-21) weighs down his spirit." Depression of spirit is an ever-present influence, readily quickened into acuteness by the combination of minor causes. In his *Instructions for Forreine Travel* (1642) Howell speaks of fits of "melancholy" as being quite a characteristic of the Italians.

1, 2. *sooth*; see G. The subject meant by *it*, viz. 'sadness,' is easily understood from "I am so *sad*."

3. *came by*, got, acquired; cf. I. 2. 8. To 'come *by*' is literally 'to come near,' hence to be in the way of acquiring. For *by* = near cf. IV. 1. 287, "if she were *by*."

5. *I am to*, I am yet to, I have still to.

6, 7. 'And sadness makes such a dullard of me that I have great difficulty' etc.

8. *ocean*; scan as three syllables, *o-ce-an*.

9. *argosies*, large merchant-vessels; see G. *portly*; the epithet leads up to the simile in the next line; cf. III. 2. 275, 276, "magnificoes of greatest port." The comparison may be suggested to Salarino unconsciously by the fact that Antonio himself is a "signior and rich burgher."

10. *signiors*; see G. *flood*, sea; cf. IV. 1. 72, "the main flood."

11. *pageants*, shows, movable exhibitions; see G.

13, 14. *curt'sy*. "Suggested by the rocking, ducking motion in the [small trading vessels] caused by the wake of the argosie as it sails past them."—*Furness*.

15. *venture*; "a thing put to hazard, particularly that which is sent to sea in trade"—*Schmidt*; hence *such venture forth* = so much merchandise at sea. One of the chief Trade-guilds at Bristol was the 'Merchant-Venturers,' and there was a similar guild, the Merchant-Adventurers, at York. The reader may know other instances.

16. *affections*; in the general sense 'feelings.'

17. *Be...abroad*, i.e. with his ships, following in imagination their fortunes. *still*, ever, constantly; see G.

17-19. What Salanio pictures himself doing is very much what Barabas does in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, the first scene (38 et seq.) of which represents him alone in his counting-house, pondering on his great wealth:

"But now how stands the wind?

Ha! to the east? yes: see how stand the vanes?

East and by south: why then I hope my ships

I sent for Egypt and the bordering isles

Are gotten up by Nilus' winding banks:

Mine argosy from Alexandria,

Loaden with *spice and silks*, [cf. 33, 34] now under sail,

Are smoothly gliding down by Candy shore

To Malta, through our Mediterranean sea."

18. *Plucking the grass*. Johnson quotes from Ascham's *Toxophilus* (a treatise on archery): "When I was in the myd way betwixt the markes whyche was an open place, there I toke a fether or a lytle lyght grasse, and so well as I could, learned



19. *in, into. roads*, roadsteads, places of anchorage; cf. Germ. *rade*. See v. 271, and cf. *The Jew of Malta*, I. i. 85, 86:

"Thine *argosy* from Alexandria,  
Know, Bárabas, doth ride in Malta Road."

25. *sandy*; echoed by "in *sand*," 27, showing the association of ideas. Cf. "the pilot's glass," *All's Well That Ends Well*, II. i. 168.

*hour-glass*. "This illustration was a very familiar one in Shakespeare's time, when the hour-glass was an almost invariable accompaniment of the pulpit, fixed near it on an iron stand."

27. *my wealthy Andrew*, my richly-laden vessel. Knight dwells on "the propriety of the name [*Andrew*] for a ship, in association with the great naval commander, *Andrea* Doria, famous through all Italy." But the theory seems very doubtful. *Andrew* was a natural name for a ship (*Matthew* iv. 18).

*dock'd*, embedded; see G.

28. *Vailing*, lowering; see G. The word was used absolutely of a ship 'striking' its sails to a superior foe, hence its appropriateness here.

29. *her burial*, the sand in which she is buried. The picture is of a vessel whose mast has fallen and rests on the sand.

35. *worth*; agreeing loosely with *vessel*, 32.

*this*, i.e. all this merchandise, viz. the "spices" and "silks"; or perhaps *this* may be accompanied by some gesture intended to suggest magnitude, e.g. the hands stretched to the full and then closed as the speaker says "And *now* worth nothing." Some think that some words have dropped out.

36-8. "If I can picture all this to myself, shall I not also picture the grief which the occurrence of such a disaster would cause me?" He seems to use *thought* in slightly different senses, viz. 'faculty of thinking,' 36, and 'the actual thought that,' 37.

38. *such a thing bechanced*, the happening of such a thing; an idiom like *occisus Cæsar*, 'the death of Cæsar.'

39. *I know*; of course, emphatic.

40. *to think*; a gerundial infinitive = *in* or *at* thinking; showing the old locative sense of *to* = 'at' or 'in.'

42. *bottom*, ship; the part put for the whole. Cf. *Twelfth Night*, v. 60, "With the most noble bottom of our fleet."

43. *Nor to one place*; cf. I. 3. 17-21.

44. *Upon*, dependent on. Yet it afterwards seems as if Antonio's fortunes did depend upon the ships then at sea; cf. 177-9.

50. *Janus*, a Latin deity, commonly represented with *two* heads (*Janus bifrons*); best known in connection with the Roman custom of opening the gate of his 'temple' during war as a

sign that he had gone out to assist the Roman army, and shutting it during peace.—*Classical Dictionary*. The point of Salarino's oath (cf. "two-headed") is that he speaks of *two* kinds of men.

52. *peep*; "as in laughing, when the eyes are half shut"—*Warburton*. Or could it mean—"are always on the look-out for the humorous side of things"?

53. i.e. laugh even at a bagpiper as heartily and foolishly as a parrot laughs at anything and everything.

54. *other*; see G. *aspect*; accented on 2nd syllable; see G.

56. *Nestor*, i.e. *even* Nestor; the oldest and wisest of the Greek heroes of the Trojan war, hence a type of gravity. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. 3. 169, and *Lucrece*, 1401, "There pleading might you see grave Nestor stand."

57. *comes*; singular to agree with Bassanio, the chief person; he is probably in front, and perhaps the only one whom Salanio sees at the moment when he begins to speak.

60. *made you merry*; a congenial task which Gratiano attempts.

61. *worthier friends*; cf. "better company," 59. *prevented*, forestalled, anticipated, see G.

62. *Your worth*; taking up Salarino's "worthier friends"; Antonio courteously protests against his friend's self-disparagement.

64. *embrace the occasion*, take the opportunity to.

66. *Bassanio*; not a common Italian name. It is said that an Italian family named *Bassano* lived in London in Shakespeare's time. Also, there was a small town *Bassano* by the river Brenta.

67. *strange*, i.e. he has not seen them lately: 'you are quite strangers.' *must it be so?* i.e. *must you go?*

68. *We'll make our leisures* etc. Either a polite way of saying that they will finish their conversation with Antonio some other time, leaving him now to Bassanio, or an expression of readiness to accept any invitation from Bassanio, who had complained of their becoming so "strange" to him.

69. Scan, "My Lord | Bassa|n'o, since | you've found | Antón|io"; the last two syllables of *Antonio* being redundant.

73. *Gratiano*; a descriptive name; 'one who *ingratiates* himself'; 'a popular (*gratus*) fellow.' Novelists, e.g. Dickens and Thackeray, often use descriptive names of their characters.

74, 75. 'You take life *too* seriously: over-anxiety about one's fortunes, position, etc. defeats itself by making existence a burden.' We must remember that Gratiano (an agreeable "rattle," as he has been called) is the speaker; but there is often much truth, if also some exaggeration, in what he says. Probably line 75 is a glance at *Matthew* xvi. 25.

77. *but as the world*, i.e. for what it really is, at its true value.

78. Cf. the famous passage, "All the world's a stage" in *As You Like It*, II. 7. 139 (an idea not peculiar to Shakespeare).  
must; Bacon says: "In this theatre of man's life it is reserved only for God and the angels to be lookers on."

79. No doubt Antonio uses *sad* with something of its sense 'grave, serious' (see G.), but his words are also meant to foreshadow the unfortunate "part" which he "plays" in the drama. Similarly Gratiano's "Let me play the fool" describes the character assigned to him—"the Fool's or buffoon's part [being] a constant character in the old comedies; from whence came the phrase 'to play the fool'."

80. *With mirth and laughter*; put first because emphatic.

82. *mortifying*, causing death; an allusion to the old medical idea that every sigh cost the person a drop of blood. Cf. "blood-consuming sighs" and "blood-drinking sighs," 2 *Henry VI*, III. 2. 61, 63. There is an element of truth in the idea, since depression of spirit has a physical effect on the heart, the great blood-vessel of the body. "Broken hearts" are literally a cause of death. See note on 85, 86.

84. i.e. be as cold and motionless as an alabaster figure of his grandfather. *Alabaster* (or gypsum) was formerly much used for monuments and figures in churches. Cf. *Othello*, v. 2. 5, "monumental alabaster." Nottingham was noted for its carvers in alabaster.

85, 86. *creep into the jaundice*. "In this whole passage the intimate connection between mind and body is sketched with exact physiological truth. Perhaps the most curious and undoubted instance of the mind's influence in the production of bodily disease is jaundice caused by depressing emotion. It is not always 'crept' into, since bad news has frequently been known to cause jaundice in a few hours. In Copland's *Dict. of Medicine* it is stated that 'The most common exciting causes of jaundice are the more violent mental emotions,' and in the list of these emotions, which he adds, he specially includes 'peevisishness.' In Watson's *Lectures on Physic*, that able physician states that among the causes of jaundice 'the *pathemata mentis* play their assigned part; fits of anger and fear and alarm have been presently followed by jaundice.' This curious medical fact Shakespeare has here sketched with exact fidelity. The effect of wine on the temperature of the liver, and despondency on that of the heart [81, 82], are also unquestionably medical thoughts" (note in Furness). It is said that strong emotion produces an actual chemical effect on the body, e.g. that depression "acts as a chemical poison within the system."

88, 89. 'Whose countenances are overcast with a set expression as unchanging as the surface of a pool of standing water.' The noun *mantle*=the scum that forms on the surface of standing water; cf. *The Tempest*, iv. 182, "the filthy-mantled pool," i.e. covered with a filthy scum, and *King Lear*, iii. 4. 138, 139, "the green mantle of the standing pool." And *cream* has the same sense. *sort*, kind.

90, 91. 'And *who* preserve an obstinate silence in order to gain a reputation for' etc. The subject *who* is easily supplied from 88. Omission of the relative pronoun where the subject is obvious from the context is one of the commonest *ellipses* in Shakespeare, especially after 'there is' and 'there are.' It is an illustration of "Elizabethan brevity." Cf. 175.

92. *conceit*, power of thought, intellectual capacity; see G.

93. *As who*, like one who; cf. F. *comme qui dirait*, i.e. *celui qui*. Probably *who* in 'As *who* should say' was originally an indefinite pronoun='any one, some one,' the whole phrase (Middle E. 'als *wha* say') being used parenthetically like our common phrase 'as one might say.' But in Shakespeare's use of the phrase (cf. I. 2. 41) *who* seems to be a relative with the implied antecedent '*one* or *he who*.' See Abbott's *Shakespearean Grammar*, p. 175.

"*Sir Oracle*"; a contemptuous turn of phrase (pomposity being here implied). Cf. *The Tempest*, ii. 1. 286, where Antonio refers slightly to Gonzalo as "This ancient morsel, this Sir Prudence." The Folio has a curious reading, "I am *sir an Oracle*."

94. "*let no dog bark*"; a proverbial phrase for 'let there be complete silence,' 'let not a sound be heard.'

95-9. 'I know some men of this type who owe their reputation for wisdom *solely* to the fact that they say nothing; whereas I am certain that if they did open their lips they would talk so foolishly as to cause their listeners to call them "fools" and thus incur the condemnation mentioned in Scripture,' viz. in *Matthew* v. 22.

Editors compare *Proverbs* xvii. 28: "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."

98. *would*; another instance of the omission of the subject where easily supplied, viz. *they* from "If *they* should speak."

101, 102. Probably *melancholy bait* and *fool gudgeon* are each pairs of nouns in apposition, e.g. 'this bait of (or 'which is') melancholy' and 'this fool of a gudgeon' (colloquially). The gudgeon of course is a fish very easy to catch. The general sense is 'do not seek to acquire this easily won reputation by assuming an air of gravity.'

102. *opinion*. Scan *-ion* as one foot *i-ōn*, letting the accent fall on the last syllable. In Shakespeare and in Milton's early poems the termination *-ion*, especially with words ending in *ction*, such as 'perfection,' 'affection,' 'distraction,' is often treated as two syllables, especially at the end of a line. In Middle English poetry the termination *-ion* was always treated as two syllables. See 139.

108. *moe*; see G.

110. Commonly *gear* = business, matter; and for *this gear* is a vague colloquialism = for this occasion, in this case; cf. II. 2. 152. Here it seems to mean 'now' (emphatic), i.e. 'after all that you have said.'

112. *a neat's tongue*, an ox-tongue.

113. *Is that any thing now?* Is there *any* sense now in that remark? The suggestion *new* for *now* loses the antithesis between "any thing" (113) and "nothing" (114).

114. *speaks...nothing*, i.e. talks a deal of nonsense; cf. Gk. οὐδὲν λέγειν. So in *The Tempest*, II. 1. 170, "Prithee, no more: thou dost talk nothing to me."

124. *something*, to some extent. *port*, state, splendid style; much the same as "noble rate" in 127. See *The Taming of the Shrew*, I. 1. 208, "Keep house and port and servants, as I should." Cf. *port* = stately bearing, dignified deportment.

125. *continuance*, i.e. of.

126, 127. *to be abridged from*, to be forced to give up, have to curtail, that extravagant style of living.

128. *to come fairly off from*, to get honourably clear of.

130. *gaged*, involved, pledged; cf. F. *gage*, a pledge.

132, 133. i.e. and your affection for me gives me the right to confide my schemes to you, etc.

136, 137. *stand...Within the eye of honour*, is an honourable scheme; literally 'is of such a kind that an honourable man can contemplate it,' i.e. is not one from which he should turn away at once.

*as you yourself still do*; a graceful way of reassuring Bassanio, who has spoken apologetically of his debts.

*still*, i.e. in spite of his extravagance: it had been imprudent but no worse, and he has shown himself anxious to pay all he owes.

139. *to your occasions*, to meet, or at the disposal of, your requirements.

141. *his fellow*, the fellow shaft or arrow.

*flight*; an archer's term for the 'carrying' quality of an arrow. Arrows 'of the same flight' were identical as regards length, weight, etc., and therefore sure to go the same distance if shot under the same conditions.

142. *advised*, heedful.

143. *forth*, out; or perhaps to *find forth* is a kind of zeugma = to go forth and find.

144. *this childhood proof*, this experiment made in boyhood.

145. *pure innocence*, mere foolishness. He uses this jesting strain to cover the embarrassment he feels in asking a fresh favour of Antonio. For *innocent* = fool, idiot, cf. *All's Well That Ends Well*, iv. 3. 213, "the shrieve's fool... a dumb innocent." Lear calls his fool an "innocent," III. 6. 8.

146, 147. *like a wilful youth*. There is no strict construction; perhaps he hesitates for a moment, and then, instead of completing the sentence regularly with '*I have spent*' (or some similar ending), adds rather abruptly—'Well, what you lent me is all gone!' Irregularity of style is the most natural means of suggesting a speaker's embarrassment or agitation. Many passages in Shakespeare should be explained on this principle.

148. *self*, same; as often in Shakespeare. Cf. Morris, *Outlines of English Accidence*, p. 184 (Revised ed.): "Self was originally an adjective = same, as 'in that selve moment' (Chaucer)." Cf. Germ. *derselbe*, 'the same.'

150, 151. *or... Or*. Cf. III. 2. 64. *Either* and *or* (a contracted form of *other*) are 'doublets'—that is, different forms, which have come down to us in different ways, of the same original word. The essential idea of each is 'offering an *other* thing, i.e. an alternative.'

154. *To wind about*, etc., to appeal to my love in this round-about way, i.e. instead of straightforwardly. The metaphor in "wind about" seems to be that of a sportsman warily approaching game and stealing from one sheltering object to another till he gets within range.

*circumstance*, circumlocution—'beating about the bush,' as we say.

156. *In making question of*, in doubting my willingness to do the utmost I can for you.

160. *prest*, ready at once to do it. F. *prêt*, O.F. *prest*; cf. Ital. *presto*. Cf. 'to press forward,' to do something.

161. *richly left*; strictly these words (= a great heiress) are the key to Bassanio's "plots and purposes," 133: he has got (to put his case in the worst light) into financial straits and decides that the way out is a wealthy marriage. Yet somehow after this first scene one never thinks what was the original motive of his suit to Portia—nor does he; for in her presence all such vulgar considerations shrivel up, and he is purely the lover whose ardour would be the same were she "the beggar

maid." Here too, though he does just indicate his "purpose" in the words "richly left," he straightway passes into a rhapsody over Portia for her own sake.

162. *fairer*, i.e. a thing that is fairer. Not only is Portia beautiful, but she has wondrous virtues (i.e. moral and mental qualities), which is a state (or possession) more beautiful than beauty of face.

163. *sometimes*. Elizabethan writers use both *sometimes* and *sometime* = 'formerly, once,' and that is thought to be the sense here. For *sometime* = former cf. university phrases like 'sometime fellow,' 'sometime scholar.'

165. *undervalued*, inferior; cf. II. 7. 53.

166. *Portia*, daughter of Cato Uticensis, and wife of Brutus, the leader of the conspiracy against Julius Cæsar. Brutus and Portia are prominent characters in *Julius Cæsar*; cf. II. 1. 293, 295, where she speaks of herself as:

"A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife,

A woman well-reputed,—Cato's daughter."

167. The alliteration is a rhetorical touch emphasising his enthusiastic eulogy.

168. *the four winds*. Perhaps Shakespeare had in mind the passage in *Ezekiel* xxxvii. 9, "Come from the four winds, O breath." So Milton in *Par. Lost*, III. 326; Tennyson in *Pelleas and Ettarre*.

169, 170. Shakespeare did not forget that Venetian women were famous for a rich golden-red tint of hair. The Elizabethan traveller Coryat describes how the women at Venice used, after washing their hair, to let it dry in the sun, so as to give it this golden effect.

170-2. The allusion is to the expedition of the Argonauts under Jason to Colchis (Gk. Κολχίς or Κόλχος) in Asia (on the east coast of the Euxine or Black Sea), to obtain the golden fleece of the ram which Hermes had given to Phrixus. Phrixus sacrificed the ram and presented the fleece to his father-in-law Aetes, king of Colchis, who had it hung up in the grove of Ares and guarded by a dragon. Jason obtained it by the help of Medea (see v. 13).

171. *strand*; in the original editions *strond*, an old pronunciation; cf. the cognate Icelandic *strönd*.

175. *thrift*, thriving well, success.

178. *commodity*, merchandise in stock, on which he could raise an immediate ("present") loan.

181, 182. *rack'd*, strained. *To furnish thee to*, to supply thee with means to go to Belmont, i.e. in an adequate style. We hear later of new liveries for Bassanio's servants, rich presents, etc.

183. *presently*, at once; a common use; cf. "present" in 179.

185. i.e. either on the strength of my business credit, or for my personal sake (meaning that some friend may lend it.)

184, 185. The purpose of a rhymed couplet at the close of a scene is to mark the termination.

## SCENE II

This scene naturally introduces us to the lady of Belmont, about whom our curiosity has been roused. It is more a scene of indirect explanation and characterisation than of action, as must be the case so early in a play. Yet it helps in several ways. We learn something about the device of the caskets on which so much is to hinge; also that Bassanio will meet with a friendly welcome, at the least. Then the enumeration of the suitors which is led up to so naturally gives scope for that keenly intellectual wit which is one of Portia's striking traits; and so from the point of view of characterisation the scene is very important. Given a competent Portia, it produces a delightful effect on the stage, especially where she describes the French lord and the young English baron (an illustration of the good-humouredly impartiality of Shakespeare's satire).

6, 7. *no mean happiness*. So the Quartos; the Folio has *small*, which loses the quibble. Cf. "to be seated in the *mean*" (= to occupy a middle position in life).

7. *superfluity*; abstract for concrete; cf. *King Lear*, IV. i. 70, "the superfluous man," i.e. he who has more than enough.

8. *comes...by*, gets; as in I. i. 3. Great wealth, such as Portia's, involves anxiety, which leads to gray hairs.

9. *sentences*, maxims (= Lat. *sententiæ*).

13, 14. *It is a good divine*, etc.; cf. the description in *Hamlet*, I. 3. 47-51 of the "ungracious pastor" who "recks not his own rede," i.e. does not follow the advice he gives to others.

16, 17. *for the blood*, to restrain the passions.

19. *the cripple*; because "good counsel" is slow and circumspect in its movements compared with the hare, the proverbial type of levity.

*But this reasoning*, but philosophising thus (i.e. about "the brain" and "the blood" etc.) is not the way to—does not help me to—select a husband for myself.

22, 23. *by the will*; a quibbling reference to *will* = testament.

24. *nor...none*; the emphatic double negative.

30. *who shall*. So the 1st Quarto; the 2nd and Folio insert *you*, making *who* = *whom* (as sometimes). But, as Furness



argues, the very idea of the lottery (really a test of character) was that it would discover the true lover, so that Portia would have no cause to regret being debarred from choosing.

31, 32. *these princely suitors*. The thought has probably occurred to many readers besides Johnson—Was Shakespeare hinting at the aspirants to the hand of Queen Elizabeth? Perhaps her personal vanity applied to herself the description of Portia's beauty and graces (I. I. 161-72).

33. *thou*; ordinarily used in addressing inferiors, e.g. by a master to a servant, who replies by *you*.

35. *level at*, guess at; the metaphor of aiming at.

36. *First*; she naturally begins with the Italian.

37, 38. *a colt...talk of his horse*; the people of Naples were celebrated for their horsemanship. Editors quote an apt illustration from Florio's translation (1603) of Montaigne's *Essays*, which Shakespeare may have known in the original French: "While I was a young lad, I saw the *prince* of Salmona, at Naples, manage a young, rough, and fierce horse, and show all manner of horsemanship; to hold testons or reals [coins] under his knees and toes so fast as if they had been nayled there, and all to show his sure, steady, and immoveable sitting." An old writer calls the Neapolitans "the schoolmasters of all Christendom in the art of horsemanship." "Colt" is still a colloquial term for a young fellow who is rather rough and headstrong.

38. *appropriation to*, "addition to his other accomplishments."

40. *the County Palatine*; meaning probably the Count (see G.), more often called Elector, of the Rhine Palatinate; cf. his Germ. title *Palsgraf*. Johnson, however, suggested that Shakespeare had in mind a Count "Albertus a Lasco, a Polish Palatine, who visited England in our author's lifetime [1583]. was eagerly caressed and splendidly entertained; but running in debt, at last stole away, and endeavored to repair his fortune by enchantment." Perhaps the visit, though so far back, suggested the reference.

41. *as who should say*; cf. I. I. 93, note.

42. *choose*, i.e. take someone else. She means that he is a solemn self-satisfied prig who thinks that Portia will be the loser if he does not wed her.

43. *the weeping philosopher*, a modern counterpart of Heraclitus, the celebrated Greek philosopher of Ephesus, who flourished about 513 B.C. In later life "he appears to have become a complete recluse...retreating to the mountains, where he lived on herbs" (*Classical Dictionary*). From his gloomy way of life and views he was known as "the Weeping Philosopher," in contrast to Democritus of Abdera "the Laughing

Philosopher"—a nickname due to the supposition that Democritus always laughed good-naturedly at the follies of men.

44. *sadness*, gravity; cf. I. i. 79, and see *sad* in G.

45. *I had rather*. Literally *rather* = sooner (hence preferable), being the comparative of *rath* or *rathe*, early, soon; cf. *Lycidas*, 142, "the rathe primrose," i.e. the early. A phrase like 'I had rather' may be analysed 'I would consider it preferable' (from *have* = hold, consider). So 'I had as lief' = I would consider it as pleasant (from *lief* = dear). No doubt both expressions were influenced by the similar *lieb haben* in German and O.F. *avoir cher*.

48. *by* = with regard to, about; a figurative use which comes naturally from the radical meaning 'near.'

52. *he hath a horse better than*, i.e. he talks even more than the Neapolitan about the merits of his horse.

53. *a better bad habit*, a more exaggerated bad habit.

54. *throsile*; a diminutive of *thrush*, but the same in sense. The old editions had *trassel*. Pope made the change.

56. *marry twenty husbands*; since he is "every man in no man." It is the traditional satirical picture of the volatile French character.

59. *What say you...to?* how do you like? Portia's reply is a quibble on *say* in its ordinary sense of 'speak.'

*Falconbridge*; a name made familiar to us by *King John*.

60. *of England*. For an English noble to travel in Italy was almost as common then as in the last century to make 'the grand tour' of Europe. Indeed many English of all classes visited Italy, as one can see from travellers' narratives and the constant allusions in plays of the period. Thus in *As You Like It*, iv. 1. 38, the typical traveller is described as one who has of course "swam in a gondola," i.e. been to Venice. People like Ascham (*Schoolmaster*) thought that the custom was not altogether desirable. The Italians had an uncomplimentary proverb about the English traveller who affected Italian ways.

61-8. Imagine how this must have appealed to an Elizabethan audience, more especially to any of Shakespeare's noble friends (like the Earl of Southampton) who chanced to be present when *The Merchant* was first acted.

62, 63. *he hath neither Latin* etc.; a satirical reference, scarcely less appropriate now than then, to the average Englishman's ignorance of foreign languages.

65. *a proper man's picture*, the very picture of a handsome man. A common meaning of *proper* in Shakespeare; cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, i. 2. 88, "a proper...gentleman-like man."

66. *suited*, dressed. The point is that the Englishman not

only imitated the dress of foreigners (a stock subject of satire) but showed such bad taste in mixing up different styles. Cf. Greene's *Farewell to Pollie* (1591): "I have seene an English gentleman so defused [irregular, confused] in his sutes, his doublet being for the weare of Castile, his hose for Venice, his hat for France, his cloake for Germanie." Now the well-dressed foreigner imitates the simple English style for men.

67. *doublet*; the ordinary Elizabethan name for a jacket. Literally a 'double,' i.e. inner garment, as compared with the overcoat or outer cloak. Editors show that "round" was specially applicable to the shape of the kind of *hose* (i.e. knee-breeches) then commonly worn in France. *bonnet*; see G.

69. *Scottish*; so the Quartos; the Folio *other*. No doubt the change was made in the acting-version, after the accession of James I in 1603, on account of the (unfair) imputation of cowardice to the Scots.

71, 72. *charity*; see G. *borrowed of*, received from, but did not return, i.e. the Englishman struck the Scot, not *vice versa*.

74. *the Frenchman became his surety*. "Alluding to the constant assistance, or rather constant promises of assistance, that the French gave the Scots in their quarrels with the English."—*Waburton*.

74, 75. *sealed under for another*, i.e. pledged himself that the Scottish lord would repay the Englishman the box on the ear. A metaphor from putting one's name and seal to a bond as guarantee for a friend.

88. *Rhenish*, Rhine-wine (cf. III. 1. 34), such as a German would like. *Rhenish*; see G.

*contrary*, wrong. She speaks jestingly, as it is hardly to be supposed that she has told Nerissa which is the right casket.

95. *by some other sort*, in some other way than by pledging themselves to the terms imposed by your father; see II. 9. 9-16. Some take *sort* = lot (Lat. *sors*).

97. *as old as Sibylla*. Editors note that several Sibyls are mentioned in mythology, the word meaning 'prophetess,' and not being strictly a proper name; but that Shakespeare means the Sibyl of Cumae in southern Italy—the one who offered the Sibylline Books to Tarquin. She "obtained from Apollo a promise that her years should be as many [hence 'old'] as the grains of sand she was holding in her hands. The story is told by Ovid, *Metamorphoses* xv." (Rolfe, who shows that Bacon also uses the word as a proper name).

99. *Diana*; the goddess of the moon, and also regarded as the huntress among the deities. "She is a maiden-divinity never conquered by love"—*Classical Dictionary*: hence in literature

the type of virginity. Cf. Milton's *Comus*, 441, 442, "the huntress Dian...Fair silver-shafted Queen for ever chaste."

102. *I pray God grant them*; softened in the Folio to *I wish them*—some think, on account of the Act (1605) of James I forbidding profanity on the stage, especially the profane introduction of the name of the Almighty. The editors of the 1st Folio often observed this Act either by omitting an objectionable passage or phrase altogether or by making some slight change, e.g. substituting *Heaven* or *Jove* for *God*. Cf. *Richard II*, 1. 1. 187—Quartos, "O, God defend my soul"; Folio, "O, Heaven defend." But not always; cf. 46.

105. *scholar...soldier*; the Elizabethan ideal; Sir Philip Sidney.

107. *as I think*. Betrayed into speaking hastily ("yes, yes"), she as quickly adopts a colder tone and affects not to be quite sure of the name. But Nerissa, we may be sure, has drawn her own conclusions.

115. *The four strangers*; apparently an oversight, as Nerissa enumerated six. Assuming that *The Merchant of Venice* was based on an older play, Hunter suggested that *four* was the number in the original, and that Shakespeare added "the English and Scottish lords, the better to please an English audience," but omitted to alter the number.

121. *condition*, disposition.

123. *shrive me*, be my father-confessor (i.e. because "a saint"). *shrive*; see G.

### SCENE III

We have met one of the two chief figures in the play, Portia, and we now meet the other, the rich money-lending Jew Shylock; a bitter enemy of Antonio, as Bassanio might have known, and therefore the last man in Venice to whom he might have been expected to apply for assistance.

Has Shylock already formed his scheme, thinking that Antonio's financial position (17-24) gives it a prospect of success? His deliberation whether to accept Antonio's surety may be assumed, partly to avoid raising suspicion, partly to enable him to enjoy the luxury of causing the hated Christians anxiety and humiliation, and witnessing it.

Another view, however, is that Shylock's scheme is the sudden outcome of the words "Antonio shall be bound" (5, 6).

In two of Shylock's speeches there are apparent reminiscences of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. See 87, 98, notes.

*Enter...Shylock*. Furness quotes a marginal note from the stage-copy of the great actor Edwin Booth. "Shylock enters with slow, shuffling gait; restless, half-closed eyes, and the

fingers of his disengaged hand (one holds his staff) ever moving, as if from the constant habit of feeling and caressing the ducats that are passing through them."

1. The value of the *ducat* (see G.) varied in different countries. The Venetian ducat was worth between four and five shillings—one old writer says 4s. 8d., another 4s. 2d.; and, roughly, you may reckon an Elizabethan £1 = £8 of modern money. How much therefore was the loan, "three thousand ducats"?

4. *the which*; often in Shakespeare; cf. F. *lequel*.

5. *be bound*, be pledged as surety.

7. *May you stead me?* can you assist me? *may*, can; the original sense; cf. Germ. *mag*.

*stead...pleasure* (oblige); each is a good illustration of Dr Abbott's remark that in Elizabethan English "almost any part of speech can be used as any other part of speech." "Any noun," he adds, "adjective, or neuter verb can be used as an active verb. You can 'happy' your friend, 'malice' or 'foot' your enemy, or 'fall' an axe on his neck."

12. *good*, wealthy; cf. 'in good circumstances.' Schmidt compares *Coriolanus*, I. i. 14-16, where "poor" and "good" are contrasted. Bassanio, of course, takes the word in its ordinary sense, and Shylock explains the sort of 'goodness' he means.

17. *sufficient*, i.e. as surety for the 3000 ducats.

*in supposition*, only assumed to exist (because exposed to risks such as he describes in 21-4); hypothetical, not realised.

18. *Tripolis*, i.e. Tripoli, a Barbary State; on the Mediterranean coast of Africa; it was the great channel of trade to Central Africa. A vivid impression of the world-wide trade of Venice (and England).

19. *the Rialto*, the great Exchange of Venice, where the merchants met (46) for the transaction of business. 'On (or 'upon') the Rialto' (35, 36, III. i. 1) is equivalent to the business man's phrase 'on 'Change.' See pp. 174, 175.

21. *squandered*, scattered; implying perhaps that Antonio has not acted very prudently in risking so much all at once.

23. The Mediterranean was infested with pirates in Shakespeare's time, and long after; indeed the Barbary pirates (Moors) were not suppressed till the beginning of the 19th century. London had a fund for the redemption of captives in Barbary.

31, 32. Referring of course to the herd of swine, *Matthew viii your prophet*; Jesus Christ. Shylock's scorn ("I will not... pray with you") is destined to a terrible recoil upon himself.

*Nazarite*. Furness says: "The use of this word instead of *Nazarene* is at first sight puzzling. The distinction between a

'Nazarite' and a *Nazarene* is of the broadest. Samson was a Nazarite, and is always correctly so called by Milton in his *Samson Agonistes*. And John the Baptist was a Nazarite. Shylock must have known perfectly well that the Prophet who conjured the devil into the swine was not a Nazarite, but a Nazarene." But Furness learned that all the older versions of the Bible used *Nazarite* = a man of Nazareth, a *Nazarene*, and that the latter word first occurs in the Authorised Version (1611).

38. *publican*, i.e. a Roman tax-collector, Lat. *publicanus*, as in the parable of the 'publican and the Pharisee,' *Luke* xviii. 10-14; a natural term of contempt and loathing in the mouth of a Jew. Perhaps the best explanation of *fawning* is, that what Shylock has in mind is *not* the ordinary bearing of the *Publicani* in general towards the Jews—the *Publicani* being the representatives of their proud Roman conquerors—but the "humility and contrition before God" attributed to the special publican of the parable. Antonio, remember, was depressed ("sad") before Bassanio asked for the money, and now he experiences the humiliation of having to seek the assistance of the Jew whom he has treated with such contempt, and also of having to break a long-cherished custom (58-61) and thereby expose himself to insulting taunts (66, 67). It would not be strange therefore if, being a sensitive man, he wore a downcast look. See also p. 195. (*Publican* = 'innkeeper' is quite modern; besides, on the lips of a Jew, the word would naturally have its Scriptural sense.)

39-49. Observe the grounds of Shylock's hate, the curious mixture of motives—religious, national, avaricious. It is the hate of the Jew for the Christian, of the despised alien for the proud Venetian citizen, of the usurer whose deity is avarice for the merciful man who brings down the rate of interest by lending out money gratis: three terrible motives of malice, and the last motive the strongest (40).

39, 40. *for*, because = *for that* in 40. *That* is often in Shakespeare added to conjunctions without affecting the sense; cf. 'though *that*,' 'if *that*,' 'when *that*,' 'lest *that*.' There may be an ellipse, e.g. 'because *it is the case that*.'

*simplicity* = foolishness (as Shylock judges); cf. 'simple' = foolish, 'simpleton.'

42. *usance*, interest on money. More often Shakespeare has *use*; cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 768, "But gold that's put to *use* more gold begets."

43. *upon the hip*, at a disadvantage; a metaphor from wrestling, in which 'to catch' your adversary 'on the hip,' i.e. get hold of him by the hips, enables you to throw him. By a fine stroke of the "irony" of fortune—one of those revenges which the

whirligig of time brings in—Shylock has these very words flung at him (IV. I. 332).

46. *there where*, on the Rialto.

47. *thrift*, gain; a favourite word with Shylock; cf. 78, 79, 165.

48. *tribe*, race; cf. 54, 99.

54. *Tubal*; the name occurs in *Genesis* x. 2.

56. *Rest you fair*; "a salutation in meeting, and oftener in parting (the word *God* mostly omitted)." Cf. II. 2. 64.

59. *By taking*; qualifies "lend" (58), as *by giving* does "borrow."

60. *ripe*; a courteous euphemism (Bassanio being present) for 'pressing.'

61, 62. Antonio's question is addressed to Bassanio but answered by Shylock, a sign perhaps of eagerness, which he disguises immediately (64).

61. *possessed*, informed; cf. IV. I. 35; literally, 'to put in possession of the news, fact, that,' hence 'to inform.'

64. *you told me so*; turning to Bassanio; cf. line 2.

66. *Methought*; see G.

67. *Upon advantage*, at interest; *advantage*, i.e. something over and above the original sum (cf. "excess," 59). *I do never use it*, no, it is not my custom.

69-71. Mention of Jacob's sojourn with Laban naturally suggests its cause, viz. Jacob's having supplanted Esau, and the result of the supplanting, viz. that Jacob became "the third possessor."

The most popular Bible in Shakespeare's time was the Geneva Bible (1560), which had quite superseded the Great Bible of 1539 (our first English Bible) and exercised much influence on the speech of the people. The official version, appointed to be read in Churches, was the Bishops' Bible (1568). Later (1611) came our Authorised Version. Shakespeare's plays also have echoes of the Prayer-Book.

71. *The third*, not the third *from* Abraham, but the third in the line of possession, i.e. Abraham is included as the first.

*ay, he was the third*. The reason of the emphasis seems to be that the fact of Jacob becoming "the third" at the expense of Esau is an illustration of that scheming (i.e. on the part of Rebecca) which Shylock calls "a way to thrive" and of which he is about to give an example.

74-7. The Scriptural reference is to *Genesis* xxx.

75. *were compromised*, had made an agreement together.

76. *eanlings*, new-born lambs; see G. *pied*, particoloured; see G.

78, 79. *thrive...thrift*; cf. 47. *blest*, fortunate in the matter.

The point of the illustration is that as Jacob took advantage of Laban and thereby made a profit, so may a money-lender *take advantage of another man's embarrassment* by requiring him to pay interest on a loan. That, morally, is the great argument against usury.

80. Antonio seems to mean that Jacob's good fortune in respect of the sheep was not the result of his trick but the legitimate reward of his labour as servant ("served for" being emphatic); hence his case is not similar to that of the money-lender who does no labour for the interest he gets.

83. *inserted*, introduced into the conversation, i.e. by Shylock; some explain 'inserted in Scripture.' *to make...good*, to justify.

84. *is*; singular because *gold and silver* form a single idea—'money.'

85. *I make it breed*; see 123, note, and pp. 175-7.

87. Now a proverbial line. Cf. *The Jew of Malta*, where (in 1. 2) one of the Christians says that Barabas deserves to be stripped of his wealth:

"If your first curse fall heavy on thy head,  
And make thee *poor* and scorned of all the world,  
'Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sin";

to which he replies:

"What bring you scripture to confirm your wrongs  
(i.e. evil deeds)?  
Preach me not out of my possessions."

91. *falsehood*; not in the limited modern sense 'a lie,' but 'deceit.'

92. Observe Shylock's complete indifference to the opinion of Christians—a feature so prominent in IV. 1. He does not deem Antonio's insult worthy even of annoyance; cf. his contemptuous bearing towards Gratiano, IV. 1. 139-42.

94. *beholding*, indebted to; see G.

97. *usances*; cf. 42.

96, 97. *in*=on (as often); cf. III. 1. 1.

98, 99. Cf. again *The Jew of Malta*, where Barabas says, I. 3. 20, 23-5:

"We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please:  
I learned *in Florence* how to kiss my hand,  
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,  
And duck as low as any barefoot friar."

*Still*, always, ever.

*a shrug*; a gesture specially appropriate to one dwelling in Italy.



*sufferance*, endurance, putting up with wrongs; cf. III. i. 60. It also meant 'suffering,' 'distress'; cf. *King Lear*, III. 6. 113.

*the badge*. The word is used in reference to the fact that at Venice the Jews had to wear a yellow cap in sign of their nationality. (Cf. the quotation from Bacon, p. 176.) Shylock points to his cap as he speaks. Scott makes Isaac of York wear one (*Ivanhoe*, IV).

101. *gaberdine*, cloak; see G. It is said that the cloak worn by the Jews at Venice did not differ from that worn by the citizens, the only distinctive mark in their dress, so far as we know, being their cap.

102. *that which is mine own*; we shall find Shylock using this argument again (IV. i. 90-100).

106. *did void your rheum* = did 'spit' upon me.

107. *foot*; cf. 7, note.

112. *in a bondman's key*, in a slave's tone.

122. *friendship*; abstract for concrete, 'friend'—hence "his" in 123.

123. *A breed for barren metal*, i.e. interest. Shakespeare here, as in 85, refers to the old argument, stated by Aristotle, against usury, viz. that money is naturally a "barren" thing and does not multiply itself like animal life. Thus Bacon mentions as one of the grounds on which usury has been condemned, "that it is against Nature for Money to beget Money." The Quartos have "a breed for," i.e. increase in return for; the Folio "a breed of." In either case there is a strong antithesis between "breed" and "barren."

Antonio means that he will, for once, pay interest, though it is against his custom; cf. 58-61.

125. *Who*; instead of continuing "will pay" (or some equivalent), Antonio, speaking with some passion (cf. "you storm"), changes to the far more vivid "thou mayst." The 'irregularity' illustrates exactly the difference between spoken English with its swift transitions and written English.

*break*; short for *break his day* (152), meaning 'fail to keep' (as in breaking the terms of an agreement). Cf. *The Jew of Malta*, I. 2. 153, "For if we break our day, we break the league." The phrase is said to have been common.

126. Shylock sees that, carried away by the memory of all his wrongs, he has gone too far in taunting Antonio and may lose the opportunity of lending the money, and through the loan having his revenge; so he changes his cue altogether.

128. *stain'd*; perhaps not merely figurative ('disgraced'), but with a literal reference to 101, 106.

129. *no doit*, not a farthing; see G. Omission of the relative *which*.

133-40. The proposal is made in a light, jesting manner, so as to disarm suspicion. Note how the recurrence of the sibilants ("such"... "sum" etc.) heightens the farcical effect intended.

134. *Your single bond*; commonly explained 'a bond with just your signature and no names of sureties'; possibly 'without witnesses to your signature,' since Shylock wishes to represent the affair as entirely an informal, "merry" transaction.

138. *nominated for*, assessed at. *for*; with the notion 'standing for, representing.' *equal*, exact, like "just" in IV. I. 325; from the scales being equally balanced when the 1 lb. weight is in the one and the flesh in the other. What "irony" that Shylock should himself emphasise the condition 'an *exact* pound'! See IV. I. 323-30.

149-51. Ironical, but said in a tone of affected surprise and regret.

150. *teaches*; an example, apparently, of the so-called "Northern plural" in old English.

157. *extend*, offer; perhaps the metaphor of 'extending the hand of friendship.' Schmidt says 'show.'

159. *for*, because of; after this kind offer Antonio, he hopes, will cease to treat him ill.

163. *purse*; see G.

164. *my house*. A so-called "Shylock's house" is pointed out to confiding tourists at Venice; likewise "Desdemona's house" (*Othello*) on the Grand Canal, and *Othello's*. In the great Italian cities the Jews were compelled to live in a special part, "the Jews' quarter" or "Ghetto" (from a Heb. root 'to cut off'), generally surrounded with walls that served for their confinement at night and their protection.

*fearful*, unreliable; from the notion 'causing anxiety.'

165. *an unthrifty knave*, a good-for-nothing fellow, i.e. Launcelot, of whom he afterwards seems to give a different report (II. 2. 132, 133).

168. *terms*; probably 'conditions' (i.e. of the bond), Bassanio's sentiment being the proverbial *timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. But Johnson says "kind words, good language."

169, 170. Cf. 146-8. *dismay*, cause of alarm.

## ACT II

## SCENE I

The end of the last Act marked (practically) the completion of the first stage of the Bond-story, since it was clear that Antonio would sign the bond. Till the expiration of the three months the Bond-story is, as it were, in abeyance. The interval is filled partly by the development of the parallel story of the Caskets (to which we revert in this scene), partly by the introduction of a subordinate story, the elopement of Lorenzo and Jessica (II. 3-6). This subordinate story has a close connection with the others.

*Flourish*; a loud sounding of trumpets, in sign of triumph, ceremonious entry, etc. Cf. III. 2. 49.

1. *complexion*; four syllables; see I. I. 102, note. The old stage-direction is rather quaint: "Enter Morochus a *tawmie* Moore all in white."

2. *The shadow'd livery of*, the dusky garb of, i.e. conferred by. *livery*; see G. *burnish'd*, glowing.

3. i.e. his native country is near the equator.

4. *fairest*, i.e. as opposed to 'dark' people like himself.

6. There may be an allusion to "the fashion in Shakespeare's time for the young gallants to stab themselves in the arms, or elsewhere, in order to drink the healths of their mistresses, or to write their names, in their own blood"—*Mason*. Cf. *King Lear*, II. I. 35-7, where editors quote Marston's *Dutch Courtezan*, IV. I, "religiously vowed my heart to you, been drunk to your health, eat glasses, *stabbed arms*, and done all the offices of protested gallantry for your sake."

7. *whose blood is reddest*. "It must be remembered that *red* blood is a traditionary sign of courage. Thus...in III. 2. 86 cowards are said to have livers as white as milk; and an effeminate and timorous man is termed a 'milk-sop'"—*Johnson*. Morocco woos as a savage warrior, who thinks that feats of courage are the best recommendation.

9. For *fear* = make to fear; cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, II. 6. 24, "Thou canst not fear us, Pompey, with thy sails."

10. *best-regarded*, thought most of. *clime*, country; see G.

12. *Except to steal*, etc.; unless by so doing I could the better win your affection. *steal*; cf. V. 19.

*my gentle queen*. He is not only boastful but something familiar in his tone—a particularly unhappy error in approaching Portia.

13. *In terms of choice*, in the question of choosing; practically = in choosing.

14. *nice direction*, the fastidious guidance. *nice*; see G.

18. *hedged me by his wit*, constrained me by his judgment (or wisdom), i.e. in devising the lottery of the caskets; *will* is a needless change, as Shakespeare uses *wit* in wide senses = judgment, wisdom, understanding.

19. *His wife who*, the wife of *him* who. The antecedent of *who* is contained in *his*: a frequent idiom.

20-2. *stood as fair...For*, would have as good a chance of winning; a polite statement which is strictly, though ambiguously, correct as regards her recent suitors (1. 2). Morocco naturally, but comically, interprets it as a compliment (22). There is thought to be a quibble on "fair"; cf. "fairest," 4.

25. In Elizabethan times the expression 'the Sophy' (or 'Sophi') was exactly equivalent to 'the Shah' (i.e. of Persia) in modern English; see G.

26. *fields, battles*. Cf. the similar use of Lat. *campus*. A common Miltonic meaning; cf. *Paradise Lost*, II. 767, 768:

"Meanwhile war arose,

And fields were fought in Heaven."

*Sultan Solymán*, i.e. Solymán the Magnificent, Sultan of Turkey; lived 1490-1566. As he conquered a good deal of Persia, the feats of the "Persian prince" were the more remarkable, and Morocco's own exploit the greater. *Sultan*; see G.

31. *alas the while!*; literally 'alas for the times'; cf. "woe the while," *Henry V*, IV. 7. 78. Practically each phrase = 'alas' (intensively).

32-8. Where all depends upon luck, as in a game of dice, and in this lottery of the caskets, the weak has an equal chance with the strong.

Morocco's mistake is to suppose that the choice of the right casket depends upon "blind fortune" and not upon character, of which the apparent lottery really furnishes a true test.

32. *Lichas*; "an attendant of Hercules, who brought his master the poisoned garment [from Deianira], which destroyed the hero. Hercules, in anguish and wrath, threw Lichas into the sea"—*Classical Dictionary*.

33. *Which is*, i.e. to decide which is. *better*, stronger.

35. *Alcides*. Hercules was the grandson of Alcæus, who was the son of Perseus and Andromeda.

*page*; Rowe's certain correction of the reading in the Quartos and Folios, viz. *rage*.

36. *blind*; referring to the common representation of Fortune as a goddess blindfolded, cf. *Henry V*, III. 6. 33, 34, where Fluellen explains, "Fortune is painted blind, with a muffler afore her eyes, to signify to you that Fortune is blind." The

'blindness' is a symbol of Fortune's wayward, seemingly blind, dispensation of favours.

42. *In way of marriage*; she quotes the precise words of the "oath"; cf. II. 9. 13. For *in way of* cf. I. 1. 55, "in way of smile." *be advised*, consider, do not decide hastily.

43. *Nor...not*; cf. I. 2. 24.

44. *to the temple*; where "his oath" (II. 9. 2) is to be taken; cf. "swear," 40. She means the private chapel, such as is attached to large country-houses in Italy, but uses the word *temple* as more likely to be understood by Morocco, and perhaps more agreeable to him (a Mahommedan).

46. *blest*; probably meant as a superlative, the termination of *cursed'st* serving for both words.

## SCENE II

*Enter Launcelot.* The original stage-direction is *Enter the Clowne alone*, which points to the part that *Launcelot* (diminutive of *Launce*) is meant to play.

1. *will serve*, i.e. will *have* to, though at present it tries to prevent him from running away. Or *not* may have dropped out: "will not serve," i.e. opposes, whereas "the fiend" encourages.

2. *fiend*; see G.

8. To "scorn with the heels" was a phrase = to scorn utterly, "kick up contemptuously at [an] idea, as animals throw up their hind legs"—*Steevens*. So here the phrase is used with quibbling reference to "run."

9. *pack*, begone; cf. the pretty old song, 'Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day.'

*Via!* Away, forward! An Italian phrase, picked up, no doubt, by travellers and introduced into English as a colloquialism; common in Elizabethan plays.

10. *for the heavens*, in heaven's name.

12. *hanging about the neck of*, i.e. to wheedle his "heart" out of its inclination.

19, 20. *God bless the mark!*; "originally a phrase used to avert the evil omen=saving your reverence [cf. 21], under your pardon"—*Schmidt*. Launcelot means to ask pardon for mentioning the "devil."

23. *incarnation*; meaning *incarnate*. Cf. the mistakes that Bottom makes in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* through his love of long words, e.g. 'exposition' for 'disposition,' IV. 1. 43; and Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Sheridan's famous character Mrs *Malaprop* (F. *mal-à-propos*) in the comedy of *The Rivals* has given her name to verbal blunders—*malapropisms*, as we say—of this kind, e.g. 'epitaph' for 'epithet.'

On the stage the device has become a traditional means of raising a laugh.

29. *master Jew's*. The fact that he does not mention any name shows how well known Shylock is in Venice.

31. *sand-blind*, purblind, quite blind; cf. '*stone-blind*.'

32. *try confusions*; meaning '*try conclusions*' = make an experiment, have a turn with. The 1st Quarto has *conclusions* but all the later editions *confusions*, and probably Launcelot was intended to blunder over the big phrase. The blunder is made more apposite by the fact that he does proceed to confuse his father.

39. *God's sonties*. Various explained as a corruption of (1) '*God's santé*' = health, (2) '*God's sanctity*,' (3) '*God's dear saints*'—*sontie* being a corruption of *sauntie*, which is the diminutive (and so may express 'endearment') of *saunt*, a form, as in Scotch, of *saint*. The last explanation is much the best; in (1) the use of a French word is very awkward. Observe that oaths and asseverations generally get corrupted; see *marry* in the Glossary.

42. *Master*; emphasised, to reprove the old man for omitting the title (much the same as '*Esquire*').

43. *raise the waters*, create a storm, because of the news he is about to give. Perhaps a metaphor like '*raising a storm in a tea-cup*.'

47. *well to live*, alive and well, literally '*well in living*'; or perhaps, '*well to do*.'

48. *a'*; corruption of *he*.

50. *and Launcelot*; "i.e. plain Launcelot; and not, as you term him, *master* Launcelot"—*Malone*.

51. *ergo*; Latin for '*therefore*'; another of his fine scraps of diction.

55. *father*; a common form of address to an old man, so that it does not strike old Gobbo particularly. Cf. *King Lear*, where Edgar more than once (iv. 6. 72, v. 2. 1) addresses the blind Gloucester thus in a disguised voice and the latter does not suspect who he is.

57. *the Sisters Three*, the Fates, Lat. *Parcæ*—Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, whose work was summed up in the line, *Clotho colum retinet, Lachesis net, et Atropos occat*, i.e. Clotho holds the spindle, Lachesis weaves man's fate upon it, and Atropos cuts the web (and thus brings man's life to an end). Cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. 343, 344, where Thisbe invokes them just before she stabs herself:

"O Sisters Three,  
Come, come to me."

There, as here, Shakespeare seems to be rather laughing at the frequent mention and introduction of the Fates in contemporary poetry; they were always being dragged in.

58. *as you would say*; you emphatic; the speaker himself having a grander "Sisters Three" style.

74, 75. *you are not Launcelot*. Understand that Launcelot kneels with his back to his father, who feeling the back of his son's head and finding "what a beard" (85-7) he has got, is at first sure that he cannot be Launcelot. The trick being at the expense of a blind old man might seem rather painful, but on the stage Launcelot's part in the incident is commonly played so good-humouredly that one only sees the grotesque aspect.

84. *if thou be*. "Note Gobbo's respectful 'you' until he recognizes Launcelot, and then his change to [the affectionate] 'thou'."

85. *Lord worshipped!* merely an asseveration: 'would to Heaven he might be Launcelot.'

87. *fill-horse*, shaft-horse; see G.

95. *set up my rest*, determined to; a phrase drawn from a favourite Elizabethan game of cards called *primero*, of Spanish origin. In this game "an important term is 'rest,' which was the name given to the stakes kept in reserve; when these were lost the game terminated....[Hence] 'to set up one's rest' was to venture one's final stake, to stake one's all" (*Shakespeare's England*, II. 473). The idea, then, is something decisive, final, quite resolved. No doubt, *rest* as a term of this Spanish game came originally from the Spanish word *resto*, 'a stake'; but it was bound in popular use to get the notion 'remainder,' i.e. the *rest* of one's money. Elizabethan writers often use the term "to set up one's rest" quibblingly.

98. *tell*, count; once a common use, e.g. in the Bible ("tell the towers thereof," *Psalms* xlviii. 12). Cf. "the tale of bricks." *finger...ribs*; of course an inversion of what he means.

99, 100. *give me your present to one Master Bassanio*; *me* is the ethic dative (surviving from the old dative), the force of which varies according to the context—'for me,' 'I pray you,' (as here) 'look you.' Cf. *The Taming of the Shrew*, I. 2. 11, "knock me at this gate." See other instances in Abbott, p. 147.

100. *rare new liveries*; in character with his "noble rate" (I. 1. 127) of living, well known in Venice. It so happens (though Launcelot can scarcely be aware of it) that Bassanio is just about to order some liveries (106), in preparation for his visit to Belmont.

101. *any ground*. "A characteristic speech in the mouth of a Venetian. Ground to run upon being a scarce convenience in

Venice, its lower orders of inhabitants regard the great expanse of the mainland with feelings of admiration which can be little entered into by those who have been able, all their days, to walk where they would"—*Knight*.

103. *I am a Jew, if*; a common saying; cf. *Much Ado About Nothing*, II. 3. 272. It arose from the popular feeling with reference to the Jews.

110. *Gramercy*; thanking him for his salutation; *F. grand merci*.

111-28. The stage "business" in this dialogue is for Launcelot to push the old man to the front to speak, then to seize and twist him round and speak himself, and then thrust him to the front again at the words "as my father shall..."; and so on, to the bewilderment of Bassanio and old Gobbo too.

119. *are scarce cater-cousins*, do not agree very well together. Perhaps old Gobbo's reason for describing the relations between Shylock and Launcelot so mildly is that he stands rather in awe of "master Jew" (29), and does not like to use a strong expression, which, if it came to Shylock's ears, might cause trouble.

123. *a dish of doves*; a natural present in Italy, where doves, it is said, are a common article of food.

125, 126. *impertinent to myself*; meaning the opposite—*pertinent* to = one that concerns me.

133. *preferr'd*, recommended. The noun *preferment* has rather a different sense—'advancement, promotion,' i.e. the result of being recommended. For Shylock's motives in the matter see II. 5. 49-51.

136. *The old proverb*, viz. 'the grace of God is better than riches' (or 'is wealth enough'). *parted*, divided.

142. *More guarded*, more richly braided: *guards* were trimmings, facings, e.g. the gold or silver lace on a uniform; so called from *guarding* the edge. Cf. the pseudo-Shakespearean play, *The London Prodigal*, III. 1, "I'll have thee go like a citizen, in a guarded gown and a French hood."

144-53. The reference is to palmistry; Launcelot studies the palm of his hand and pretends to interpret the "lines" on it. In 145, 146, *if any man* etc. there is no doubt an ellipse, the full sense being to this effect: 'if any man in Italy taking an oath can show a palm with more favourable lines on it than mine, may I be hanged, or I am vastly surprised (understand some such phrase), for certainly there is good luck in store for me.' Perhaps the ellipse arises in this way, that after "book" he pauses for a moment to have a closer look into the lines on his hand and is so struck by their promising appearance that he forgets the



imaginary possessor of a "fairer" palm. After a pause one is apt to lose the thread of construction.

In chiromancy, or, to use the simple word, *palmistry*, the "table line or line of fortune," is the line running from the forefinger, below the other three fingers, to the side of the hand. The *natural line* is the line which curves in a different direction, through the middle of the palm; and the *line of life* is the circular line surrounding the ball of the thumb. The space between the two former lines being technically known as *the table*"—*Staunton*.

*which*; referring probably to the personal antecedent, "man," as so often in Shakespeare; see p. 193. But the antecedent might possibly be "table," Launcelot humorously suggesting that the man's hand takes the oath.

*upon a book*. The act of opening his hand puts him in mind of a witness in a law-court placing his hand on the Bible as he takes the oath (*Johnson*).

149. *a simple coming-in*, a poor allowance; cf. *income*. Of course, he speaks ironically.

152-3. *for this gear*, i.e. for once; meaning in his case. Cf. I. I. 110.

156. *bestow'd*, put away, i.e. on board the ship that is to take him to Belmont (*Furness*).

164. *deny*, refuse.

166. *hear thee*; probably formed on the false analogy of phrases like *beseech thee*, *pray thee*, 171, *prithie* (where *I* is omitted in each case).

168. *Parts that become thee*, qualities that suit you well enough.

171. *too liberal*, i.e. they seem rather 'free and easy.' *pain*, pains.

172. *allay*, temper, moderate; see G.

176. *habit*, bearing, manner.

177. *with respect*, heedfully; not in his usual rattling style.

178. *demurely*, gravely, soberly; it has rather gone down in sense.

179. *saying*, i.e. *in saying* (verbal noun) = is being said.

180. *with my hat*. "The practice of wearing the hat at meals, and especially at ceremonial feasts, was probably derived from the age of chivalry. In the present day, at the installation banquet of the Knights of the Garter, all the Knights Companions wear their hats and plumes. It appears to have been usual formerly for all persons above the rank of attendants to keep on their hats at the 'dinner-table'"—*Staunton*.

181. *civility*, good manners, rather than 'politeness' (as now).

182. *a sad ostent*, a grave demeanour.

## SCENE III

The Lorenzo-Jessica story has a threefold relation to the main drift of the drama:

(1) It helps to illustrate the character of Shylock, especially on its avaricious side (see III. 1. 69-110), which is so vital a feature in the action, and shows him in his domestic relations, which we should not otherwise see.

(2) More important: it furnishes in its highly romantic emotional strain a contrast to the graver love-story of Bassanio and Portia.

(3) Most important: it furnishes an additional and intensely strong motive of Shylock's bitterness in pressing for the execution of his bond against Antonio. Note II. 8. 4-11, 25, 26. It has been well said that this play is particularly rich in the delineation of minor characters.

3. *some taste*, a little of.

10. *exhibit*, restrain; meaning perhaps *inhibit*.

20. *strife*, i.e. between her duty to Shylock and love of Lorenzo. So Desdemona has "a divided duty," to Othello and to her father, *Othello*, I. 3. 181.

## SCENE IV

1-3. Apparently Lorenzo's proposal is that during the banquet at Bassanio's house some of them should steal away, "disguise" themselves, and then return in a torchlight masquerade, "as a surprise to the rest of Bassanio's guests." Compare the scene, from Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*, in *Henry VIII* (I. 4) where "the king and others, as masquers," surprise Wolsey's guests by their unexpected appearance. Of course Shakespeare's purpose in introducing the masquerade is to make Jessica's flight easier, i.e. seem more natural.

2. *Disguise us*, i.e. put on their vizards for the "masque" (22). The old English name was a 'disguise' or 'disguising.' Cf. Bacon's *History of Henry VII*, "masks, which were then called disguises," *Pitt Press* ed. p. 219 and Ben Jonson's *Masque of Augurs*:

"*Notch*. Our desire is only to know whether the King's Majesty and the Court expect any Disguise here to-night?

*Groom*. Disguise! What mean you by that?

*Notch*. Disguise was the old English word for a masque, sir."

In some parts of England (e.g. the north) the Christmas mummers are still called "Guisers" (i.e. 'disguisers').

5. *speak us...of*, bespoken. Probably *us* = for ourselves. *torch-*

bearers; an essential feature of an Italian masquerade (*Romeo*, I. 4).

6. *quaintly order'd*, arranged gracefully. *quaintly*; see G.

9. *Friend Launcelot*. No doubt this is not the first missive of the kind that Launcelot has brought Lorenzo.

10. *break up*; similarly used = 'open' in *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. 1. 56; the practice of sealing made it a natural use for the Elizabethans.

15. *By your leave*; a common formula of departure = 'excuse me.'

22. *masque*; see G. What Shakespeare has in mind is a *masquerade* or torchlight procession, in which the performers wore *masks* or *vizards*, and played on instruments like the fife (II. 5. 30) and drum. We must not confuse it with a *masque* such as occurs in *The Tempest*. The *masque* was a development of the *masquerade* and became a sort of play, with so much music, solo and concerted, and elaborate scenery as to make it almost an opera. Nothing of that kind is meant here, but just a procession as in the modern carnivals, so popular in Italy.

29-39. Essentially an explanation to the audience, though it sounds natural as the lover's confidences to his friend.

35-7. 'And may misfortune never dare to cross Jessica's path unless she (misfortune) does so on this plea, that Jessica is the daughter of an infidel and deserves to suffer on his account.'

Bassanio's party is a 'farewell' to his friends. Shylock, of course, would afterwards regard the invitation as simply a trick to get him away from home and so facilitate the elopement. But this scene shows clearly that the idea of so using the chance came from Jessica herself; moreover Bassanio had invited Shylock as far back as I. 3. 30.

## SCENE V

3. *thou shalt not gormandize*. We have seen Launcelot's view of the case (II. 2. 97, 98, "I am famished" etc.).

11-18. His indecision whether to go gives tension to the situation, since we know that his absence will make it much easier for Jessica to escape. Her anxiety as he hesitates makes itself felt.

14. *But yet I'll go*; contrast what he previously said, I. 3. 31-6.

17, 18. Compare Antonio's foreboding of evil, I. 1. 1 (note).

17. *a-brewing*. Here *a* is used for *an*, another form of *on*, which in turn is closely akin to *in*; while *brewing* is the verbal noun.

The verbal noun was used with *on*, *in*, *a*, (1) after verbs of motion, as "he went *on hunting*," "he fell *on sleeping*"; (2) with

a passive signification after *is*, *was*, e.g. "the church was in building," "this was a doing"; and (3) with *a* in phrases like "he is long *a rising*." We have an illustration of (1) in line 24, "fell a-bleeding"; of (2) in II. 2. 179, where the preposition is omitted; of (3) in this line. In each case the tendency is to drop the preposition; thus "*a rising*" is now colloquial, or provincial, or intentionally archaic, but not ordinary, current English.

*rest*, peace of mind.

18. Editors show that it was a popular superstition that "to dreame of money, and all kinde of coyne is ill."

*to-night* = last night, not an uncommon use; cf. *Lear*, I. 2. 24.

21. *So do I his*; since Shylock knows how Bassanio will reproach him if the scheme against Antonio succeeds.

22. *they have conspired together*, i.e. to get up a masquerade; but for the audience who know of the conspiracy against Shylock, viz. Jessica's elopement, the words have a significance of which Launcelot himself is unconscious. It is in fact an instance of verbal "irony," and so are Shylock's directions to Jessica about shutting up the house so carefully.

24. "An unexpected bleeding of the nose was formerly considered an omen that either something wonderful would happen, or that some mischance would ensue.... When Charles II was concealed at Boscobel House on the Sunday, 'his majesty, coming down into the parlour, his nose fell a bleeding, which put his poor faithful servants in a fright,' till he reassured them by saying it was a circumstance of frequent occurrence"—*Halliwel*.

24, 25. *Black-Monday* = Easter Monday, and therefore a 'movable' day, as Launcelot seems to imply in the nonsense that follows. Editors quote Stow's *Chronicle*: "In the 34 Edw. III. [i.e. in the 34th year of his reign = 1360] the 14. of April, & the morrow after Easter-day, K. Edward with his hoast lay before the cittie of *Paris*; which day was full darke of mist & haile, & so bitter cold, that many men died on their horses backs with the cold. Wherefore unto this day it hath beene called the *Blacke monday*."

30. *fife*. Boswell says, "The 'fife' does not mean the instrument, but the person who played on it" [cf. 'spear' = spearman]. So in Barnaby Rich's *Aphorisms* at the end of his *Irish Hubbub*, 1616: "A fife is a wry-neckt musician, for he always looks away from his instrument." But Rich may have misunderstood this passage, and some think that the instrument, i.e. a small flute, is meant, the old English flute having a curved mouthpiece like a bird's beak (cf. the French name *flute à bec*): hence the description *wry-neck'd* = 'crooked-necked' here. Cf. Horace, *Odes*,

III. 7. 29, 30. This rough music and torches (II. 6. 40) were of course invariable features of the masquerade or comic procession.

31. *you*; emphatic from position: *she* is not to do as others.

33. *varnish'd*, painted; because wearing painted masks.

36. *Jacob's staff*. Cf. *Genesis* xxxii. 10, "for with my staff I [Jacob] passed over this Jordan," and *Heb.* xi. 21. Remember Shylock's earlier allusions to Jacob, i. 3. 68-79. Commonly a *Jacob's staff* meant 'a pilgrim's staff,' because St James, or Jacob, was the patron saint of pilgrims. He is usually represented with a pilgrim's hat and staff, and pilgrims to his shrine of Compostella in the north-west of Spain carried a staff.

43. *worth a Jewess' eye*, i.e. worth your being at the window to look at. Said with quibbling reference to the proverb "worth a Jew's eye," i.e. worth a good deal—'a Christian whom you greatly value'; meaning Lorenzo.

The Quartos and Folios have *Jewes*, commonly taken to stand for *Jewess*, which obviously suits the metre. Shakespeare, however, does not use *Jewess* elsewhere but always *Jew* as a feminine (cf. II. 3. 11, II. 6. 51). Some think therefore that the true reading here is *Jew's*, pronounced slowly *Jewés* (two syllables); a pronunciation that may have been intended by the peculiar spelling, *Jewes*, in the original editions. On the whole, however, most critics prefer *Jewess*. A quibbling variation on the proverbial phrase seems to me at least as pointed as a direct quotation of it. The proverb dated from the mediæval times of the persecution of the Jews, when to escape mutilation a Jew had to pay up a sum of money, no doubt a very high sum, to save his eye.

44. *Hagar's offspring* = Gentiles and (from Shylock's point of view) outcasts.

46. *The patch*, the fellow, clown. See G.

47. *profit*, useful work.

48. *the wild-cat*; which is nocturnal in its habits; common in the wooded districts of England till long after Shakespeare's time; now found only in the wildest parts of Scotland and Wales.

51. *His...purse*; more correctly "*the purse of*" after *that*.

## SCENE VI

1. *pent-house*; properly a shed or outhouse leaning against a building; but also used, as seemingly here (cf. "under"), of part of a house projecting over a roadway or pavement, as for instance in the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells. A corruption of *pentise* or *pentice* from O.F. *apentis*, 'a shed'; cf. F. *pente*, 'a slope,' *pendre*, 'to hang,' Lat. *pendere*.

5. In mythology "doves" are the special birds of Venus and draw her chariot, just as peacocks are sacred to Juno and draw hers; similarly the eagle is the sacred bird of Jupiter and the sparrow of Cupid. Cf. "dove-drawn" applied to Venus in *The Tempest*, iv. i. 94. Of course it is not the "doves" who "seal the bonds" etc. but Venus herself who is drawn by them.—*Heath*.

7. i.e. to keep unbroken faith that has once been solemnly pledged.

8. *That ever holds*, that sentiment—what you say—is universally true.

10. *untread*, retrace.

11. *measures*; supposed to allude to feats such as circus-horses are trained to perform. Cf. *measure* = a dance, as in 'to tread a measure.'

14. *How like...a prodigal*; some think that *Luke* xv. was in Shakespeare's thoughts. *younker*, stripling; rather implying one who is smart and gay.

15. *scarfed*; "decorated with flags"; the "silken streamers" of *Henry V*, Prol. iii. 6, used for purely decorative purposes.

30. *who?* The neglect of the inflexion is very common, especially in interrogative phrases; cf. modern colloquialisms like 'Who did you see?'

31, 32. *yours*, your love. His answer to her is, 'in your inmost thoughts you *know* that I love you.'

35. *exchange*; explained by 39.

36. *love is blind*. Cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, i. i. 234, 235:

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;

And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind."

This notion of Cupid's blindness is mediæval rather than classical.

42. *too too*; an intensive iteration frequent in old writers.

*light*, wanton; with a quibble on the candle's light. Cf. v. 129.

43. *discovery*, exposure. 'It is a duty (i.e. holding up the torch) which will reveal me.' Cf. *discover* in ii. 7. 1.

44. *I should be obscured*, I ought to be concealed.

45. *garnish*, garb, dress.

47. *close*, secret, privy. The time is slipping away.

51. *by my hood*; "he is in a masqued habit, to which it is probable that a large cape or hood was attached"—*Malone*. Steevens says that "friars frequently swore" by their hoods; but the explanation lacks evidence.

*a Gentile, and no Jew*. "A jest arising from the ambiguity of *Gentile*, which signifies both a *Heathen*, and *one well born*"—*Johnson*. The point is clearer in the Folio, which has "*a gentle*."

52. *Beshrew*; see G.

54. *if that*; see I. 3. 40, note.

56. *wise, fair, and true*; a variation on the "fair, kind, and true" of *Sonnet* 105. How far do you think Jessica is deserving of this praise?

57. *placed*, enshrined.

64. *No masque*. Observe how naturally it is dropped, having served its purpose of covering Jessica's elopement.

*come about*, veered round; and now favourable.

65. *presently*, at once.

## SCENE VII

This is the first of the Casket-scenes, which illustrate so much the nature of Portia herself, besides serving to characterise her suitors. Note carefully the respective choices of Morocco, Arragon (II. 9), and Bassanio (III. 2), with their motives, and arguments. The contrasts between them are part of the characterisation.

1. *discover*, reveal, disclose.

8. *blunt*; used with a sort of word-play on the figurative sense 'plain-spoken, unceremonious,' and the literal 'not sharp.' The "bluntness" = 'unceremonious plainness' of the warning corresponds with the "bluntness" of the metal, which you cannot sharpen like steel.

11. *The one*, the right one.

12. *withal*, with it. Note how *withal* generally comes at the end not only of a sentence but of a line.

17-21. Morocco, with an Oriental's love of show, judges by externals—the material of the casket, not the inscription; nor would the inscription if he dwelt more on it prove to his taste: its notion of complete self-sacrifice would not square with his self-satisfaction (32, 33). The nice thing about him is his real admiration of Portia. One likes him better than Arragon; she is gentler towards him when he fails.

20. *dross*, worthless matter; literally the refuse part of raw metal after it has been smelted.

22. *virgin*; referring to the cold, chaste appearance of the metal compared with gold. 25. *even*, impartial.

26. *rated by*, taken at your own valuation.

27. *enough*, a good deal. 'Your deserts are considerable.'

29. 'And yet to doubt whether I deserve her (28) would be to disparage myself unworthily.' Cf. I *Henry VI*, v. 3. 67, "Fie, de la Pole! disable not thyself."

39. Morocco is determined to be in the fashion.

40. *shrine*, image (as being the chief feature of a shrine).

*mortal-breathing*, alive like an ordinary mortal, yet a "saint."

41. "*Hyrcania*, a province of the ancient Persian Empire, on the S. and S.E. shores of the Caspian or Hyrcanian Sea"—*Classical Dictionary*. Famous as a breeding place of tigers (cf. *Macbeth*, III. 4. 101); hence proverbial, like Scythia, of all that is barbarous and savage. Cf. *Dido Queen of Carthage*, v. 1. 158, 159:

"thou art sprung from Scythian Caucasus,  
And tigers of Hyrcania gave thee suck."

*vasty*, boundless; cf. 1 *Henry IV*, III. 1. 52, "I can call spirits from the vasty deep." Apparently Shakespeare never uses *vasty* with the implied notion 'desolate' which *vast* often bears in Elizabethan writers, and which comes from the primary meaning of Lat. *vastus*, (1) 'waste,' then (2) 'vast, boundless.'

42. *throughfares*; see *thoroughly* in the Glossary.

44, 45. Cf. the picture in *The Tempest*, I. 2. 4, of the stormy sea "mounting to the welkin's cheek" (welkin = sky, heaven).

47. *As o'er a brook*, as if the ocean were no more than a stream to cross.

51. *rib*, enclose. Lead was a common material for coffins formerly. *cerecloth*, winding-sheet, shroud; see G.

*obscure grave*; scan *obscure*, an illustration of the general rule that in Shakespeare and Milton words like *obscure*, *extrême*, *complète*, throw the accent on to the previous syllable when they are followed immediately by an accented syllable, e.g. a monosyllable like *grave*. Cf. Milton, *Comus*, 273, "Not any boast of skill, but *extrême* shift," and 421, "She that has that is clad in *complète* stéel."

53. It is said that the ratio of silver to gold was as 1 to 11 at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, and 1 to 10 in 1600 (the date of the 1st Quarto of this play). Here (and still more in 55-57) Morocco seems to speak rather too much as an Englishman. *undervalued*; cf. I. 1. 165.

56. *A coin*, i.e. 'angel,' a gold coin worth about 10s. in Shakespeare's time. Quibbles on the name of the coin are very common in old writers, as might be expected. Cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. 3. 60, and the old play *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, II. 1:

"*Crom*. There are two *angels*, to buy you spurs and wands.  
*Messenger*. I thank you, Sir, this will add *wings* indeed."

*the figure of an angel*, i.e. the archangel Michael standing upon and piercing the dragon.

57. *that's insculp'd upon*, that—"the figure of the angel"—is engraven *upon* the golden coin, implying 'is outside,' whereas in this case ("here") the angel, i.e. Portia, lies inside. Note that



upon and *within* are each emphatic by position and strongly contrasted. *insculp'd*, engraved, carved, i.e. 'in relief.'

59, 60. *key...may*; meant as a rhyme; a similar case, as regards the sound, occurs in *Sonnet* 52 (*key...survey*); but that rhymes to the eye, though not to the ear.

63. *A carrion Death*, a death's head, empty skull.

65. Gray introduces the proverb (now generally misquoted "All that *glitters*") very happily into the lines "On the death of a favourite cat, drowned in a china tub of *gold* fishes."

68. *my outside*, i.e. the gold. 'Many a man has sacrificed himself for outward shows' (such as the gold symbolises).

69. i.e. *even* gilded tombs, no less than others, enclose worms. An illustration (appropriate to the contents of the casket) of the truth that outside and inside do not always correspond.

*tombs*; Johnson's almost universally adopted emendation of the reading in the Quartos and Folio, viz. *timber*, which some interpret 'coffins.' *Timber* as a plural (cf. "do") is very strange, and it mars the metre. Tombs, but not surely coffins, often used to be gilded (indeed often have some gilding put on them now); editors aptly compare *Sonnet* 101, "To make him much outlive a gilded tomb."

70. *bold*; curiously appropriate to Morocco; cf. II. 1.

71. Some adversative particle ("but") seems implied before "in judgment old."

72, 73. i.e. the answer you would have got (or 'meant for you') would not have been the one written on *this* scroll. *cold*, dead.

## SCENE VIII

4, 5. A foretaste of the Trial-scene: Shylock appeals at once to the Duke, and the Duke at once takes up his case, so important is it to Venice that the rights of aliens should be respected.

4. *The villain Jew*. The description illustrates the feeling towards Shylock and his countrymen that prevailed among ordinary Venetians like Salanio and his friend, who stand, as it were, a little apart from the action of the play; cf. again 14.

*raised*, roused, awoke; cf. *King Lear*, II. 4. 43, "He raised the house with loud and coward cries."

12. *passion*, outburst of feeling.

15-22. There is something rather similar in *The Jew of Malta*. Barabas's house has been taken from him and turned into a nunnery; but having hidden bags of money and jewels in it, he tells his daughter Abigail the hiding-place, gets her to become a nun, and arranges with her to throw the bags of

money down to him one night; this she does and he then bursts out (II. 1):

"O my girl,  
My gold, my fortune, my felicity!  
O Abigail, Abigail, that I had thee here too!  
But I will practise thy enlargement [plan your release] thence:  
O girl! O gold! O beauty! O my bliss!"

20. *two stones*; see III. 1. 73, 108.

25, 26. Significant as emphasising the connection between the Lorenzo-Jessicastory and the main action. A Christian has stolen the Jew's daughter, and the Christian Antonio will suffer for it.

27. *reason'd*, talked; cf. F. *raisonner*.

28. *the narrow seas*; formerly the common name (especially in the singular) for the English Channel. Cf. Marlowe's *Edward II*, II. 2. 166, "The haughty Dane commands the narrow seas" (repeated almost in 3 *Henry VI*, I. 1. 239).

29. *miscarried*; often a euphemism, as here (= 'was lost').

30. *freight*, laden; the shortened p. p. of the old verb *freight*, 'to load'; see *Cymbeline*, I. 1. 126. Akin probably to *freight*.

32. *were*; an optative = 'might not be'; but it was (III. 1. 4).

33. *You were best*, you had best. This idiom represents an impersonal construction changed into a personal. Thus "*I were best*" (v. 177) would in earlier English have been "*me were best*" = 'to me it were best.' People misunderstood that (1) *me* was a dative, (2) the sentence was impersonal, and substituted *I*, which seemed more correct. The impersonal constructions so largely used in Old English were becoming less familiar to the Elizabethans.

38-49. These lines, especially 46-9, illustrate a feature of Antonio's character which is not, I think, sufficiently recognised by some critics, viz. its strain of exaggerated sentiment. It is a feature that helps to explain his extreme self-sacrifice.

39. *Slubber*; properly 'to soil, sully,' hence 'to mar, spoil'—here 'spoil by haste, slur over.'

40. Remember, Antonio does not know that Portia's hand depends not on her own selection but on her suitor's choice of the caskets.

42. *mind of love*, loving mind; cf. "brow of youth" = youthful brow, *King Lear*, I. 4. 306.

44. *ostents*, demonstrations; cf. II. 2. 182.

45. In Shakespeare *convenient* and its derivatives often keep the radical idea 'to be fit, proper' (Lat. *convenire*); so here 'suitably.'

48. *sensible*, sensitive, keen.

52. *And quicken* etc., and enliven the depression ("sadness," I. 1. 6) he hugs so. *embraced*; cf. III. 2. 109.

## SCENE IX

Scene IX. On the importance in the scheme of the play of these scenes of choosing Furness has an excellent criticism. To the objection that they have little "dramatic movement" he replies "that there is in the very framework of this play a dramatic necessity of making three months equivalent to a watch in the night, and that powerful, essential aids to this end are the succession of days at Belmont, and the succession of suitors which come and go, and all the weeks which have to pass to fill up three months....No soliloquies, no dialogues can give to an audience a 'realizing sense' of this flight of time but the actual passing of the events before their eyes upon the stage." Besides, these scenes (VII and IX) let us into the secret of the caskets, and our knowledge of the right casket heightens the suspense when Bassanio chooses (III. 2).

9. "Arragon," it has been well said, "is the typical Spanish Don steeped in the prejudices and pride of his class." His speech is full of the spirit of caste. Conceit with him takes more especially the form of intellectual pride. He flatters himself that he is not as "the *fool* multitude." He represents the "wise in their own conceits": those "deliberate fools" (79), who have just a veneer (cf. "silver'd o'er," 69) of pompous wisdom. Hence the grim significance, leaving him speechless awhile, of the contents of the casket he opens. Note that (unlike Morocco) he does not mention Portia once in his speech. The satirical picture and discomfiture of a Spaniard would be much to the taste of an Elizabethan audience, for whom Spain meant Philip, the Armada, the Inquisition etc. (cf. Kingsley's *Westward Ho!*). Arragon is the only Spanish character in Shakespeare.

19. i.e., and I too am prepared to observe them.

20. *To* = be propitious to; or perhaps 'according to,' 'such as my heart hopes for.'

*base*. He is more contemptuous of the lead than Morocco (contrast "dull," II. 7. 8), in fact never gives it a thought.

25, 26. *meant By*, meant for. Malone shows that 'mean by' = 'mean for' was a common Elizabethan use (generally in the passive, as here). It comes probably from *by* = 'near,' hence figuratively 'with regard to': e.g. 'that word "many" may be meant with regard to = to apply to = for the multitude.' Cf. I. 2. 48.

*fool*; cf. I. 1. 102, "this fool gudgeon."

27. *fond*, foolish; see G.

28, 29. *but, like the martlet, Builds*, i.e. is like the martlet which builds.

*in the weather*, i.e. exposed to; cf. the description in *Macbeth*,

1. 6. 3-10 of the *martlet* (or *house martin*) and its nesting. The word *martlet* is a diminutive of *martin*, a larger species of *hirundo*, or swallow.

30. *in the force and road of casualty*, open to the shock, in the very way, of accidents. The more emphatic word is *road*.

32. *jump with*, agree with; cf. 1 *Henry IV*, 1. 2. 78, "it jumps with my humour." Hence the adverb *jump* = 'exactly, just'; cf. *Othello*, II. 3. 392, "And bring him jump when he may Cassio find."

37, 38. *go about To cozen*, seek to cheat. *cozen*; see G.

41. *estates*, positions in life, rank.

42. *derived*, got, gained. The metaphor is 'to draw from a source,' Lat. *derivare* (*de*, from + *rivus*, a stream).

*clear honour*, distinction free from all stain.

43. *purchased*, acquired; see G.

44. *cover*, i.e. their heads (cf. III. 5. 30, 31), and not stand bare-headed before those who do not deserve respect.

46-8. "The meaning is, how much meanness would be found among the great, and how much greatness among the mean"—*Johnson*.

47. *seed*, offspring; used, however, with allusion to the metaphor in "glean" and "chaff."

48. *ruin*, refuse, i.e. outcast people.

49. *new-varnish'd*; a remarkable change of metaphor, even for Shakespeare.

51. *assume desert*, take that which I deserve; cf. Horace's *sume superbiam quaesitam meritis*—*Odes*, III. 30. 14, 15. *assume*, take, appropriate, Lat. *assumere*; not 'assume that I deserve,' since he is perfectly *certain* that he does. He is even more self-satisfied than Morocco (II. 7. 27, 28).

53. An 'aside,' for the others, not for Arragon, to hear. Indeed, he is too much taken up with what he finds in the casket: hence his silence, on which she comments. The casket with its "fool's head" (59) obviously meant for him is a fearful revelation to the man who would not be as "the fool multitude."

55. Note *me* (emphatic) and *my* repeated, 57, 60.

*schedule*, written paper, "scroll" (II. 7. 64).

61, 62. Portia had warned him that if he failed he must go "without more speech" (7), and now she cuts short his protests by saying, 'No man can be at once the accused and the judge—the parts are opposite'—i.e. Arragon can not be first a chooser, having agreed to the terms, and then a critic of the competition: if one plays a game one must abide by its rules.

66. *shadows kiss*, i.e. cherish vain delusions; Arragon's being his belief in his cleverness.

68. *I wis*, surely, certainly; or perhaps 'I know'; see G.

71. *sped*, done with; 'you have had your try.'

72-7. Arragon, after the first feeling of disappointment, shows the dignity of his class and nothing becomes him so well as his manner of leaving.

82. Formerly an oft-quoted proverb. Nerissa quotes it here because she regards the failure of Morocco and Arragon as confirming what she had said before (I. 2. 25, 26), viz that the lottery was a "good inspiration," and showing that "destiny" will award Portia a worthy suitor.

84. *my lord*; a sportive rejoinder to the servant's "my lady."

88. *sensible greets*, tangible greetings, i.e. something more substantial than mere courteous words ("breath").

90. *Yet*; emphatic from position: 'as yet,' i.e. among the many who have come to Belmont and whom he has had to announce.

91. *likely*, pleasing in appearance.

93. *costly*, gorgeous; referring to nature's splendour in the summer season. A curious epithet, but meant to echo "rich" in 90.

97. *high-day*, holiday; implying, I think, 'worthy of a festival' and so 'best,' but some say 'high-flown, extravagant.' Cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, III. 2. 69, "he speaks holiday" = "in elegant and choice expressions"—*Schmidt*; and 1 *Henry IV*, I. 3. 46, "with many holiday terms."

99. *post*, messenger; cf. v. 46.

100. i.e. may it, O Love, be Bassanio! "Venetian" in 86 (cf. I. 2. 105) and "regreets" (implying some one known before) suggests Bassanio to her.

## ACT III

### SCENE I

1, 2. *on the Rialto*; see I. 3. 19, note. *it lives there unchecked*, it is still reported without contradiction. *the narrow seas*; see II. 8. 28.

4. *the Goodwins*, the Goodwin sands, near the mouth of the Thames; the scene of many shipwrecks. Mentioned in *King John*, v. 3. 11; v. 5. 13.

*I think they call the place*; the speaker, being an Italian, is not quite sure of the English name or pronunciation. "By such touches as these Shakespeare keeps before us the circumstance that the scene of his play is abroad."

6 *tall*; a common epithet for a ship = large, fine.  
*gossip*; see G.

9. *knapped*, broke off, i.e. with the teeth, nibbled. Furness refers to Cotgrave (1611), who explains *F. ronger* (to nibble) by "to gnawe, knap or nible," and *F. brouter* (to nibble like sheep) by "to browse, knap or nible." Some interpret simply 'to break into pieces.' See *G. ginger*, i.e. the spice, though 'gingerbread' (or 'gingernuts') has been suggested.

11. *without...prolixity*. He is unconscious of his long-windedness, which his friend brings to "the full stop" (15), much to his surprise (16).

19. *betimes*, in good time.

25. *the wings she flew withal*, i.e. Jessica's disguise (II. 6. 39, 45).

27. *complexion*, nature; see G.

29. *darned*; a word-play on *dam* in 28. Shakespeare makes his characters jest thus in moments of great emotion—especially bitterness—as a relief to the feelings. The dying Gaunt, angry with Richard, puns on his own name ("Old Gaunt indeed, and gaunt in being old"), *Richard II*, II. 1. 73-83, just as in the *Ajax* of Sophocles the miserable Ajax puns on *Alas* and *aldáev*, 'to cry alas!' Cf. IV. 1. 123, 279.

30. *if the devil may be her judge*; meaning Shylock; cf. 19, 20.

34. *Rhenish*, i.e. a wine such as hock or moselle, each of a light yellowish hue. Cf. I. 2. 88.

37. *match*, bargain.

38. *a prodigal*; meaning that Antonio has mismanaged his affairs, "squandered" (I. 3. 21) his ships abroad etc.; or "referring to his liberality in exposing himself to ruin for Bassanio's sake."

39. *smug*, trim, spruce; see G.

42. *for a Christian courtesy*, i.e. as; cf. 47, 113, 114 and I. 3. 41, 42. A bitter, sneering emphasis on *Christian*.

47. *hindered me*, prevented me making.

50. *Hath not a Jew eyes?* What follows is surely Shakespeare's own plea for justice to Shylock's nation; for the abolition of that injustice and oppression which, continued through centuries, had produced a Shylock. Here the Jew is at his highest: for the moment no usurer, but pure patriot aflame with the white heat of revolt against his nation's wrongs. The impression which the speech makes on the stage is intense: you feel in fact that the speaker is not Shylock the Jew of Venice at all, but suffering, oppressed Israel.

51. *dimensions*, limbs. *affections*; emphasised by some gesture and accent of grief at the thought of Jessica.

59, 60. *humility*, the Christian's forbearance. Cf. I. 3. 99.

73. *a diamond*; one of the "two stones" (II. 8. 20).

74. *in Frankfort*. Shakespeare "is fully alive to the fact that

commercial relations between Venice and Germany were of the closest description. With no German city was trade more active than with Frankfort."

74, 75. *The curse*; cf. the quotation from *The Jew of Malta* in the note on I. 3. 87.

78. *hearsed*, lying in her coffin; see G.

81. *thou loss*; addressing the "loss" as if it were some malignant person. But for this loss, he might have been more struck with the hint of Antonio's losses (34-6).

83-7. Observe how easily and naturally the transition from one subject to the other is made, and how it tends to associate the Jessica-story with the Bond-story.

95-116. Dramatically the great feature here is the conflict of emotions in Shylock—the agony over his lost money and joy at the misfortunes which are bringing Antonio in his grasp. The latter feeling prevails. The "good Tubal" seems to enjoy the conflict, and "tortures" (107) his friend with relish. Cf. the actor Booth's comment on 95: "Nod several times affirmatively before replying [i.e. to Shylock's "where? in Genoa?"] and speak the line slowly, with the least shade of wickedness in your look. Shylock's expression gradually changes from joy to agony while this line is spoken, therefore speak it slowly" (quoted by Furness).

102. *break*; see I. 3. 125.

107-9. This regret for the loss of the turquoise, a memento of his courtship and dead wife, is one of the few humanising touches in the characterisation of Shylock. At least, I do not think that we need assume with Steevens that Shylock regrets the ring "merely in respect of the imaginary virtues formerly ascribed to the stone, [which] was said to fade or brighten as the health of the wearer increased or grew less," and to forewarn him of any threatened danger by change of colour. One surely may allow something in Shylock's favour. (Many superstitious notions attach to precious stones.) *turquoise*; see G.

115, 116. *at our synagogue*. Was it there that he swore the "oath" to which he appeals in the Trial-scene (IV. I. 36, 226, 227)?

## SCENE II

4. *tells*; omission of the relative after 'there is'; cf. I. I. 90, 91, note.

6. *in such a quality*, to this effect. 'Hate does not give such advice as "stay here".'

7. *not understand me well*. She begins the sentence as if she had some other explanation than "love" to offer, but ends with

a practical confession of her feelings, "I would detain you"—and not merely for "a day or two" (1).

These opening lines show clearly her embarrassment in letting him know what she feels towards him; afterwards she frankly drops all pretence and says "[I am] all yours."

8. *but thought*, but only thought, i.e. in the matter of love a maiden cannot express her feelings freely like a man: an apology or excuse under cover of which Portia does show him her feelings by asking him to stay (9, 10).

10. *I could teach you*; because she had seen the choice and failure of Morocco and Arragon. The knowledge intensifies her anxiety (and ours) while Bassanio chooses. Maybe, she has taught him by the influence of her beautiful character!

15. *o'erlook'd*, bewitched; the notion of the 'evil eye.'

18, 19. *naughty*, wicked. *Puts*; so the old editions. Either a case of the 'Northern plural,' or singular because *these times* = this age.

*bars*. The terms of her father's will are obstacles between her and the free disposal of herself and property.

20. i.e. though yours in heart, yet not your wife, if you choose wrongly; and if it turn out so, let the blame rest with fortune.

21. The apparent antithesis is unreal; for there could be no reason why she, having kept to the terms of the will, should be punished at all. But she is too anxious just now to be her logical and intellectual self.

22. *peize*, retard, make it go slower; see G.

23. *eke*, increase; see G.

25-39. Note how the metaphor of a supposed traitor being tortured on the rack till he makes confession of his guilt extends through fourteen lines. One of the great distinctions between Shakespeare's early and later styles is his use of metaphor. In the early plays he will often take a single metaphor and keep to it; in his later plays, the outcome of a richer, completely developed imagination, he gives us variety of imagery, just touching perhaps on one metaphor, and then passing to another and yet another. A metaphor worked out in detail is apt to obscure or lose the original point of comparison, as in some of Milton's elaborate, classical similes.

26. Again the quibbling on words is a sign of strong feeling; see III. 1. 29. We may apply here a criticism of Hazlitt on *King Lear*: "The imagination is glad to take refuge in the half-comic, half-serious comments of the Fool, just as the mind under the extreme anguish of a surgical operation vents itself in sallies of wit."

28. *mistrust*, i.e. lack of confidence in his fortune; 'doubt.'



29. *fear*, i.e. fear for, doubt whether I shall.

30. i.e. they cannot even exist together, much less be friends.

31. *as*, i.e. *as between*.

33. A critic says:

"In all questions of politics and morals he (Shakespeare) is ever on the side of justice and humanity. He has here given us what is the great argument against the use of torture, folded up, as his manner is, in small space, fit to circulate from hand to hand, and thus produce a combination of sentiment and judgment in the whole community against what was a common but iniquitous practice of the time....At the very time when Shakespeare's actors were repeating these words at the Black Friars, or on the Bankside, the secret chambers of the Tower were actually echoing the groans of suspected persons who were subjected to this unreasonable mode of extorting information. Shakespeare must have known this, and I hope that it was because he knew it that he sent the thrilling words through the crowds that resorted to his theatre. He has at least taken care that they should be connected with the idea of treason."

41. Portia knows that the lottery is a true test of character.

43. "The music that she calls for, though she is at pains to defend it on other grounds, is really meant to allay by its soothing strains the riot of her own heart, during the interval of suspense"—*F. S. Boas*.

44. Referring to the old notion of the 'swan's song,' i.e. that the swan sings just before death. Cf. *Othello*, v. 2. 247, "I will play the swan and die in music" (cf. 45). See Tennyson's *The Dying Swan*, and cf. the third stanza, lines 8-12, with 48-50 of this passage.

49. *flourish*, i.e. of trumpets, customary at the coronation of a monarch.

51-3. An allusion to the old English "custom of playing music under the windows of the bridegroom's bedroom on the morning of his marriage."

54. *presence*, dignity of bearing; cf. 'a man of good presence.' *with much more love*; because Hercules bargained for the horses as his reward.

55-60. Laomedon king of Troy offended Poseidon god of the sea (=Lat. Neptune), who thereon sent a sea-monster to ravage the country. "By the command of an oracle, the Trojans were obliged, from time to time, to sacrifice a maiden to the monster; and on one occasion it was decided by lot that Hesione, the daughter of Laomedon himself, should be the victim. Hercules promised to save the maiden, if Laomedon would give him the horses which Tros had once received from Zeus..."

Hercules killed the monster" (but did not get the horses)—*Classical Dictionary*. The story is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, XI., to the English translation of which by Arthur Golding (1565) Shakespeare probably owed a good deal of his knowledge of mythology.

Many passages show that Shakespeare loved paintings, and was familiar with pictures (due to the Renaissance) of scenes from classical mythology. Portia's comparison is a reminiscence of some picture. In such touches we see the great influence of Italy and Italian art etc. on Elizabethan England.

57, 58. *I stand for*, I represent. *Dardanian*, Trojan; from *Dardanus*, "the mythical ancestor of the Trojans."

63. *fancy*, not true love (otherwise the 2nd stanza were most ill-omened and ill-timed), but 'fanciful love,' 'a liking' which, though perhaps strong, is fleeting; the feeling which Orsino in *Twelfth Night* describes, I. I. 14, 15:

"so full of shapes is *fancy*,  
That it alone is high *fantastical*."

His own feeling for Olivia is exactly "*fancy*": he imagines himself greatly in love with her, but she had captivated his imagination rather than won his heart, and he afterwards transfers his affections quite calmly to Viola.

The derivation of *fancy* is important to the sense: it is short for *fantasy*; hence the notion 'imagination' (Gk. *φαντασία*).

64. *Or...or*; cf. I. I. 150, 151.

67. Contrast the sentiment "Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind," *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, I. I. 234.

68, 69. i.e. when the object which excites "*fancy*" ceases to please the eyes, then "*fancy*," which has its origin (or abode) in the eyes, ceases too.

In *the cradle* (harmonising with the metaphor that runs throughout) also implies that "*fancy*" is very short-lived.

73. *So*. Johnson says, "He begins abruptly; the first part of the argument has passed in his mind." But Bassanio seems to be carrying on the sentiment of the Song. It tells him that "*fancy*" means the gratification of the eyes, i.e. depends on the "outward shows," that please the eye—no solid basis of affection; and thus he is moved to give other illustrations of "outward shows" which conceal emptiness or corruption. And this train of thought, started by the Song, leads up to the choice he makes. In fact, as has been cleverly said, the Song is really a hint to him which casket to select, or at any rate an influence that may unconsciously suggest his selection. Dramatically the great feature of the songs in Shakespeare's plays is their appropriateness to their context.

It is perhaps a sign of Bassanio's agitation that (unlike the two other suitors) he passes over the inscriptions altogether.

74. *still*, ever, constantly.

76, 77. *But...Obscures*, which does not disguise. For *but* = 'who or which not' after a negative, see 81; a frequent idiom. *season'd*; so as to disguise the taste of "taint."

78. *some sober brow*, some grave-looking divine.

79. *approve it*, justify it; cf. I. 3. 87.

81. *no vice so simple but*; a combination of 'no vice so simple as not to assume' + 'no vice but assumes.' *simple*, simple-minded.

82. Cf. the definition of hypocrisy as 'the tribute which vice pays to virtue.' *his* = its (see G.); or *vice* may be personified.

84. *stairs of sand*; a figurative expression like 'ropes of sand,' for that which is false, deceptive.

86. *livers white as milk*. See II. 1. 7, note.

87. *valour's excrement*, i.e. a "beard" (85) such as only a brave man should wear. *excrement*, outgrowth, Lat. *excrementum* = an excrescence (from *excrescere*, 'to grow out of'). Used of hair in *The Comedy of Errors*, II. 2. 79, and elsewhere.

91. *lightest*; another quibble (cf. II. 6. 42) on *light* implying 'levity of character.'

92. *crisp'd*, curled.

94. *fairness*, perhaps abstract for concrete (a beautiful woman), the sense being 'on the head of one of our fictitious beauties.' Rolfe explains—which gambol so wantonly "on the strength of their fictitious beauty."

96. *The skull...in*, i.e. *being in*; an absolute construction. Shakespeare alludes elsewhere to the custom of wearing false hair; cf. especially *Sonnet* 68, which speaks of simpler times:

"Before the *golden* tresses of the dead,  
The right of *sepulchres*, were shorn away,  
To live a second life on *second head*."

What made the practice so prevalent was that dark hair was very unfashionable. The false "tresses" referred to are generally "golden."

97. *guled* = guileful, treacherous. In Elizabethan E. the use of the participial and adjectival terminations was less fixed and regular than now, hence we find *-ed* = *-ful*. Cf. 'graced' = full of grace, dignity, *King Lear*, I. 4. 267; 'disdained' = disdainful, *Henry IV*, I. 3. 183 ("disdam'd contempt").

The Folios have *gilded* = *guled*; "expressing the glitter of cliffs and rocks, and of the sea's beach, when the sun lies upon them"—*Capell*. But probably this reading (commonly rejected now) arose through misunderstanding of the peculiar use of *guled* = guileful.

98, 99. This passage is one of the countless references in Elizabethan writers to the current depreciation of dark hair and complexion. The sting lies in *Indian*, which an Elizabethan actor must, I think, have spoken with contemptuous emphasis. It is used here to imply 'swarthy,' like "Ethiop," literally 'one belonging to Ethiopia' (in Africa), hence 'negro.' When Lysander in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* spurns the dark-complexioned Hermia he says, "Away, you Ethiop!" and "out, tawny Tartar, out!" (III. 2. 257, 263). The prejudice is thought to have arisen out of flattery to the Queen, who was fair. We have seen how dark-haired ladies were apt to remedy the defect (92-6).

Some editors have doubted whether *beauty* is what Shakespeare wrote, and one ventured to print "an Indian *dowdy*": other proposals are *bosom, feature, idol*. But "*beauty*" following on "*beauteous*" is quite Shakespearian, and gives us an antithesis between the real beauty of the scarf and the merely *Indian* beauty underneath: "the '*beauteous* scarf' is the deceptive ornament which leads to the expectation of something beneath it *better* than an *Indian* beauty"—*Brae*. To an Elizabethan the expression "*Indian* beauty" was almost a paradox and may have been so intended.

102. *Midas*, "A wealthy but effeminate king of Phrygia. In his folly he desired that all things which he touched should be turned into gold. The request was granted; but as even the food which he touched became gold, he implored Dionysus [Bacchus] to take his favour back"—which the god did—*Classical Dictionary*.

103. *Nor none*; cf. I. 2. 24. *drudge*; silver being the common form of money in use "'tween man and man."

104. *meagre*, poor; in contrast with "*gaudy* gold." So in *King John*, III. 1. 80, "the meagre earth" is contrasted with "glittering gold."

105. *threatenest*; cf. II. 7. 18.

106. *paleness*. Warburton read *plainness* because Bassanio had rejected the silver for being *pale*: also he considered *plainness*, i.e. of speech (referring to the casket's inscription), a better antithesis to "eloquence" than *paleness*.

But "*pale* as lead" was proverbial (editors quote many instances), and if Bassanio emphasises "thy" we get very fair sense without any change, viz. '*yours* is the paleness which touches me, not the silver's.' Another proposal is to read "thou *stale*...*drudge*" in 103 (i.e. hackneyed, because circulated from hand to hand).

109. *As*, such as. *doubtful*, full of apprehension. *rash-embraced*, conceived too readily.

110. Cf. *Othello*, III. 3. 165, 166, "O, beware...of jealousy... the green-eyed monster" *green-eyed*; "of a morbid sight, seeing all things discoloured and disfigured"—*Schmidt*.

112. *In measure rain*, shed in a moderate quantity; the metaphor of a liquid which underlies "allay" (see G.), and suits both "measure" and "excess." The third Quarto has *rain*=*re* in, check; it introduces a new metaphor not very appropriate either to what precedes or follows, and does not go well with "in measure" (which has to be taken 'restrain *to* moderation'). *scant*, limit; cf. II. I. 17.

115. *counterfeit*, likeness; see G.

116. *so near creation*, i.e. so near to making the portrait not merely life-like but actually alive.

120-2. Cf. his description of Portia in I. I. 169, 170.

126. *unfurnish'd*, unprovided with a fellow eye.

128, 129. i.e. even so far does the portrait fall short of the original (Portia herself).

130. *The continent of*, that which contains (Lat. *continere*).

132. *Chance as fair* etc., may you always choose as well, and be as fortunate, as on this occasion.

139-48. The rhyme here appears to be meant as an epigrammatic summing up of the whole situation.

140. *by note*, as directed, viz. by the scroll.

155. *account*, esteem.

156. *livings*, property: see v. 269 and cf. its church-use.

158. *Is sum of something*, amounts to just something—implying 'not much.' It is an intentionally quibbling ("*sum... something*"). whimsical phrase; for Portia is speaking about herself before others, always a difficult thing to do with perfect taste and peculiarly difficult for her at such a moment as this; and so while beautifully earnest in reality, and making us feel that she is, she yet relieves the situation by a touch of lightness. For *something* (Quartos) the Folio has *nothing*, which seems hardly to fit in with the fact that she proceeds to define what she is; also it loses the quibble on *sum*. Still, many good scholars adopt it, as being a bolder expression.

*to term in gross*, to describe as a whole, not in detail.

159. Her genuine self-depreciation is all the prettier for being so wide of the mark. "An unlesson'd girl" would be a quaint description of the Portia of the Trial-scene.

160. *Happy*, fortunate.

161. The pause in the middle of the line is equivalent to a syllable, thus: "hap|pier | than this" |.

163 *Happiest...is that*, i.e. the happiest thing of all is the fact that. The change "*Happiest...in that*" is neat but unnecessary.

170-4. This starts the ring difficulty very prettily. Exchange of rings was part of the Elizabethan ceremony of betrothal. Julia and Proteus give each other engagement-rings in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. 2. 5-7.

174. *be my vantage to*, give me the opportunity and right to; cf. 'vantage ground.' *exclaim on*, cry out against.

181-3. i.e. where all the confused emotions of the crowd are united into one general feeling of pure joy, which finds only inarticulate expression.

190, 191. *can wish*; meaning, I think, not only 'for yourselves' (as Bassanio will understand) but also 'for us': thus he continues (191), 'for I am certain that you cannot grudge me any joy,' literally 'wish it away from me.' He enjoys the joke of mystifying his friend.

199, 200. 'I loved as you did, since it is no more my way than yours to neglect an opportunity' (or 'to delay'). Lat. *intermissio*, a neglecting, pausing. Quartos 1 and 2 and the Folio read

"You lov'd, I lov'd for intermission,

No more pertaines to me my Lord then [*than*] you."

That reading makes *for intermission* qualify *I loved*, with the sense either 'for pastime' (which is not complimentary to Nerissa) or 'for fear of intermission,' i.e. to avoid delay; while 200 must be taken separately = 'I owe my wife as much to you as to my own efforts' (explained by 206-8). But the other way of taking the whole passage is the one commonly adopted. Elsewhere Shakespeare uses *intermission* to mean either 'cessation' or 'delay'; cf. for instance "sans intermission" = without stopping, *As You Like It*, II. 7. 32.

201. *stood upon*, depended on.

202. *falls*, falls out.

208. *Achieved*, won; see G.

214. *Salerio*. Many editors think that Shakespeare would not be likely to introduce a new character so late in the play, and that therefore *Salerio* is a misprint for either *Salanio* or *Salarino*—probably the former as *Salarino* appears in the next scene (laid at Venice).

Knight remarks that the two friends went off to visit Antonio in III. 1. (see lines 64-8), and that it is probable that one of them has come to Belmont at his request with the message to Bassanio while the other has stayed at Venice to comfort him. Also, there is certainly a good deal of confusion in the spelling of the names *Salanio* and *Salarino* in the old editions; but as they *all* agree in printing *Salerio* throughout the remainder of this scene the substitution of *Salanio* seems hardly justified. Moreover

Quartos 1 and 2 describe him in the stage-direction just after as "a messenger from Venice," which rather implies that he was a new character.

216, 217. 'If my newly acquired position here (as Portia's accepted suitor) gives me the right to bid you welcome.'

218. *very*, true; as used in the Prayer-Book.

221-6. This is the dramatist's way of accounting (and very naturally is it done) for the presence of Lorenzo and Jessica at Belmont, which re-connects them with the main action.

226. *I have reason for it*; Jessica might know something—as she does (279-85). Note her warning, which they disregard.

231. *his estate*, how he fares.

234. *royal*. Johnson says, "This epithet was, in our poet's time, more striking and better understood, because Gresham [the founder of the London Exchange] was then commonly dignified with the title of the *royal merchant*." Other editors show that a "royal merchant" in the Middle Ages was one "who transacted business for a sovereign of the time," and that the title was specially appropriate to the great "merchant-princes" of Venice, who did establish principalities and exercise sovereign rights in some of the islands of the Grecian Archipelago. See again IV. 1. 29.

236. *We...we* Emphatic. 'We among the many suitors have been successful'

*the fasons...the fleece*; cf. I. 1. 169-72. Gratiano was not present then but probably he had heard Bassanio use the allusion some other time.

237. i.e. that *you* (not Shylock) were Antonio's creditors.

238. *shrewd*, bad; not pleasant; see G.

241. *turn...the constitution of*, affect so strongly.

242. *constant*, firm, well-balanced, not emotional; a type of character greatly admired by Shakspeare; cf. Henry V, and Horatio in *Hamlet*.

256. *engaged*, involved myself in an obligation to.

257. *mere*, absolute, unqualified; see G.

262. *hit*; probably a noun = success; the metaphor of shooting at a target.

263, 264. For some of the places mentioned cf. I. 3. 18-20.

268. *present*, ready. *discharge*, pay off.

271. *confound*, destroy; as often in old writers.

273. *impeach*, call in question. *the freedom of the state*, the privileges which the state guarantees to aliens (like Shylock)—one being that aliens should have an equal claim with citizens to legal justice. Shylock says that to "deny him justice" is to show that these privileges are a myth, have no reality. See again

III. 3. 26-9; IV. 1. 38, 39. The "freedom of a city" is still a current phrase for the enjoyment of certain rights and privileges.

275. *magnifico* was the common name for a nobleman of Venice, a grandee; a similar title being '*clarissimo*' (literally 'most illustrious').

276. *port*, dignity, position; cf. I. 1. 9. *persuaded*, argued.

277. *the envious plea*, the malicious demand for.

284. *law*; a foretaste of the Trial-scene.

288. *best-condition'd*, of the kindest character. Cf. *condition* in I. 2. 121 ("the condition of a saint"). *unwearied*; understand "most" from the preceding superlative. Some would read 'unwearied'st.'

293. *For me*. Bassanio does not know whether Antonio, being pressed by other "creditors," as his letter shows (311), has contracted further debts to Shylock during the time that he (Bassanio) has been at Belmont.

294-303. It is clear that Bassanio and Portia were too much pre-occupied, he with the letter and she with him, to pay attention to Jessica's speech (279-85). For Portia thinks that it is merely a question of "paying" Shylock, and Bassanio goes off with the idea that the difficulty can be settled all right; whereas Jessica had warned him that Shylock would not take "twenty times the value of the sum." Oddly enough, that is the very amount Portia mentions (302), perhaps unconsciously repeating Jessica's words. Cf. too Salerio's speech (267-9), in confirmation of which Jessica spoke.

294. *deface*, cancel; literally 'obliterate.'

307. *cheer*, countenance; see G.

308. *dear bought*, i.e. by Antonio's sacrifice, but for which Bassanio could not have come to Belmont.

309-16. The reading aloud of the letter serves to put the whole situation more clearly before the audience.

### SCENE III

The scene is a preliminary to the Trial-scene, to which it brings the action appreciably nearer. It also fills the interval for Bassanio's journey from Belmont to Venice.

The time is the day before the Trial; cf. 34.

2. *lent out money gratis*; a great, if not his chief, ground of hostility to Antonio; see I. 3. 40-2.

5. *I have sworn an oath*. See III. 1. 115 (note); IV. 1. 36, 37, 226.

6. *Thou call'st me dog*. Cf. I. 3. 100.

9. *naughty*, bad, good for nothing; see G. *fond*, foolish; see G.



10. *To*, as *to*.

14. *dull-eyed*, stupid. Some say 'compassionate,' from the notion of the eyes being "dull," i.e. dimmed, with tears.

16. *Christian*; he flings the word out bitterly.

19. *kept*, lived; still in use among undergraduates at Cambridge, e.g. 'where do you keep?' = where do you lodge, where are your 'rooms'?

20. *bootless*; see G.

22. *his forfeitures*, penalties due to him; cf. IV. I. 24.

23. *made moan*; cf. I. I. 126.

25. *grant...to hold*, allow it to hold good in law.

26-31. The argument is: if the Duke refuses Shylock the rights to which (Antonio admits) he is legally entitled under the bond—if the Duke "wrests" (IV. I. 213) the Law in favour of Antonio a Venetian citizen against Shylock an alien—it will shake the confidence of foreigners in the Law of Venice; and loss of confidence will mean loss of trade, for the trade of Venice is largely with foreigners, and foreigners will not have dealings with and risk their money in a state where the Judges ignore the Law and side with the citizen against the foreigner.

Most scholars take 27-9 = 'the refusal of the privileges usually accorded to foreigners in Venice will greatly call in question the reputation of the state for impartial justice'—which *implies* 'will greatly damage the state.' A common meaning of *commodity* is 'advantage': hence it is used collectively here = privileges; much the same as "freedom" in III. 2. 273. *impeach*, call in question, cast doubt upon; as before, III. 2. 273.

The difficulty lies in 27, 28. We cannot make *commodity* alone the subject of *impeach*: it is the *refusal* of the *commodity* that *impeaches*: i.e. we must make "if it be denied" refer to *commodity*, whereas one certainly would expect it to refer to *course of law* in 26 (note *deny*). So some editors reverse the punctuation in 26 and 28, placing the comma after *law* and the colon after *Venice*, and read 'Twill in 29. The sense then is: 'The Duke cannot refuse the course of law (i.e. to let the law take its course), on account of the trade that foreigners have with us in Venice: if it (the course of law) be refused, it will greatly call in question' etc. *For* = for the sake of, on account of. *commodity* = trade, commercial intercourse.

But the changes are considerable and the rhythm of the passage inferior; and though it seems awkward to refer *deny* to one thing in 26 and *denied* to another in 28, yet the awkwardness is more apparent than real. Suppose Antonio had said "if it be refused," then the clause would at once have been taken to refer to *commodity*. But he said *denied* probably because

he had just used the word. Conversation is full of these unconscious repetitions.

31. *Consisteth*; singular, in agreement with the singular idea 'profitable trade.' This is a very common idiom, in literature as still in ordinary talk. Cf. *Lycidas*, 6, 7:

"Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,  
Compels me to disturb your season due."

*of all nations*; a true description of the commerce of Venice, the great meeting-point of East and West.

32. *bated*, abated, reduced.

#### SCENE IV

2. *conceit*, conception.

7. *lover*, dear friend. Cf. *Psalm* lxxxviii. 18, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me."

9. *bounty*, good nature, kindness; like F. *bonté*.

12. *converse*, have 'conversation' with, associate, = Lat. *conversari*; the ordinary Shakespearian sense. So in the heading to the 2nd chapter of *Acts*, "Who afterwards devoutly and charitably converse together."

*waste*, spend; cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, II. 1. 57, "A merrier hour was never wasted there."

13. The metaphor of two oxen yoked together. *equal*. The Folio has *egal*, then a common form nearer to the French *égal*.

14. *a like proportion*, a similarity.

15. *lineaments*, characteristics; so we speak of the 'features' of a man's character.

19. Note the words "cost" and "purchasing." She clearly wishes Lorenzo and the others to think that she refers to the offer of money which she had bidden Bassanio make on Antonio's behalf (III. 2. 294, 295). Previously she expected his offer to be accepted. But in the meantime she has thought the matter over, probably heard more from Jessica about Shylock, and realised that no offer of money will move him—i.e. that Antonio must be saved by some other means, if at all. And she evidently fancies that she has hit on a likely "device" (79), of which she gives an inkling only to Nerissa her confidant and Balthazar, whose help is necessary.

20. Literally 'in redeeming him who (Antonio) is the likeness of him who (Bassanio) is as my own soul.'

25. *husbandry*, care of, responsibility for; see G.

26-32. This is to account for her absence from home, the true cause of which is to be known only to Nerissa, though Balthazar may suspect something. Probably Portia enjoins

silence when he meets her at the ferry (53). She is wonderfully practical. Indeed, "*practical* genius" is the mark of Shakespeare's women; contrast, for instance, Lady Macbeth with her husband.

33. i.e. not to refuse this duty.

49. *Padua*. All the old editions have *Mantua*. Theobald made the necessary change; cf. IV. 1. 105-9, 401; V. 255. The University of Padua was famous for the study of law (and medicine).

50. i.e. deliver them into Bellario's own hands, no one else's.

*Bellario*; said to be a not uncommon Italian name; one of the characters in Beaumont and Fletcher's play *Philaster* disguises herself "as a Page under the name of Bellario."

51. *notes*; bearing on Antonio's case, of which she sends the great lawyer a statement in her "letter" (47). *garments*; see IV. 1. 166.

52. *imagined*; literally 'to be imagined,' and so 'all imaginable'; or "with the speed of imagination"—*Schmidt*.

53. *tranect*; commonly supposed to be connected with Ital. *tranare*, to draw. Malone says: "Twenty miles from Padua, on the river Brenta, there is a dam or sluice to prevent the water from mixing with that of the marshes of Venice. Here the passage-boat [which started from Padua] is *drawn* out of the river, and lifted over the dam by a crane. From hence to Venice this distance is five miles. Perhaps some novel-writer of Shakespeare's time may have called this dam by the name of the 'tranect'."

Another view is that *tranect* means 'ferry-boat,' so called because *drawn* through the water by means of a rope or chain (a method still used).

Many editors consider *tranect* a misprint for *traject*, from the French = Ital. *traghetto*, 'a ferry.' Elizabethan travellers make special mention of the *traghetti* or ferries, which are a notable feature of Venice and its surroundings. The chief of them is said to have been at Fusina, at the mouth of the river Brenta, and the wording of 53, 54 rather points to some particular, well-known ferry. On the whole, I think that we may keep *tranect* in the sense 'ferry-boat,' and regard it as a reference, no less than *traject* would be, to the Venetian ferries, and an illustration of the "local colour" of the play.

56. *convenient*, suitable to the occasion.

60. *habit*, garb, dress. "The Elizabethan audiences seemed to find especial pleasure in seeing female characters disguised as men, to judge from the lightness with which, throughout the drama, women slipped into doublet and hose. Rosalind and

Imogen occur to us at once; in Beaumont and Fletcher there are many more of these disguises than in Shakespeare"—*Furness*.

61. *accomplished*, furnished with the manly gifts that we lack.

63. *accoutred*, equipped; referring to their "habit" (60). The 1st Quarto has *apparrelled*.

65. *braver*, smarter; much the same as "prettier" in 64.

66. *the change of*, i.e. a boy's voice after it has "broken," and is rather thin and cracked in tone (cf. "reedy").

69. *quaint*, ingenious; see G. Here of course she imitates, in voice and manner, a swaggering "younker" telling his big tales. The scene, with its great possibilities of humour, is one of the test-parts of the play as regards the capacity of the representative of Portia.

72. *I could not do withal*; a common phrase in the present tense = I can not help it, it is not my fault. Editors quote many examples, e.g. from one of Nash's pamphlets (1596), "Beare witnes, my masters, if hee dye of a surfet, I cannot doo withall; it is his owne seeking, not mine." Literally, 'I cannot do anything with it—it's beyond me.'

74. *puny*; see G.

75. *That*, so that.

77. *raw*, school-boyish. *Jacks*, saucy fellows. Cf. *Much Ado About Nothing*, v. 1. 91, "Boys, apes, braggarts, Jacks, milksops!"

82. *twenty miles*; to Venice; or possibly to the "tranect" where she was to meet Balthazar. Evidently you could get from Belmont to Venice equally by road (III. 2. 223) and (II. 6. 64, 65) by ship down one of the lagoons or the river Brenta.

## SCENE V

3. *fear you*, fear for you.

6. *saved by my husband*. Editors quote 1 *Corinthians* vii. 14, "the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband."

18. *are out*, i.e. have fallen out. Cf. *Julius Caesar*, I. 1. 18, "be not out with me"; i.e. do not be angry.

25. *stomachs*, appetites; the best sort of 'preparation,' he thinks.

31. He quibbles on the two senses of *cover*, 'lay the table' (cf. 35), and 'cover his head' (cf. II. 9. 44).

39. *conceits*, fanciful ideas; or witticisms.

41. *O dear discretion!* Meaning that Launcelot has shown no "discretion" (= discrimination) in his use of words but "suited" them so ill to their respective subjects, i.e. misapplied them.

44. *A many*. An extension of the noun-use of *many*, e.g.

"A many of us were called together," Latimer's *Sermons*;  
 "a many of our bodies," *Henry V*, iv. 3. 95.

The idiom was probably due in some degree to the influence of *many a* (adjective) and *a few*.

45, 46. *Garnish'd*, furnished with a supply of words.

*Defy*, totally disregard; i.e. they *will* use a fantastic expression, whether it "suits" the matter to which they apply it or not.

*How cheer'st thou?* This corresponds to the noun-phrase 'what cheer?' literally 'of what cheer are you?' i.e. how are you? how do you fare?

53. *mean it*, i.e. mean to "live an upright life" (50). Some have changed *mean* to *merit*, making it = "blessing" (51), with the general sense 'if he does not deserve the blessing, i.e. live in a manner worthy of it.' But our text (the 1st Quarto's) gives fair sense. For *then In* the Folio has *it Is*, making line 53 end most awkwardly thus—*meane it, it* etc. See also p. 195.

56. *lay*, stake; as in the colloquialism 'to lay odds on.'

58, 59. *Pawn'd*, staked, pledged; so as to make the match less one-sided. *her fellow*, Portia's equal.

63-6. *stomach*, inclination to praise you. *set...forth*, praise.

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy"

(*Matt. v. 7*).

"He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (*James ii. 13*).

2, 3. *your...thee*. An illustration how *you* is the pronoun that expresses respect; the person so addressed naturally replying by *thou*.

7. *Your grace*; as though he were an English duke, but strictly the Doge was addressed as "Your Serenity."

*to qualify*, to temper, hence 'to moderate'; the metaphor of mixing water with wine.

8. Scan *obdurate* = Lat. *obdūrat*. On Elizabethan words retaining the Latin accent see *aspect* in the Glossary.

9. *that*, i.e. since that.

10. *envy*, malice (18); cf. *envious* = malicious, III. 2. 277.

13. *The very tyranny*, the full cruelty. *his*, i.e. spirit.

16. The Duke seems to think that his presence now, in the crowded court, may awe Shylock.

18. *thou but lead'st this fashion*, you are merely keeping up this appearance. *fashion*; contrasted with *act* (19).

20. *remorse*, pity; see G.

21. *apparent*, not real; said with emphasis.

22. *where*, whereas.

24. *loose the forfeiture*, remit the penalty; cf. III. 3. 22.

26. *moiety*; see G.

29. *a royal merchant*. Cf. III. 2. 234.

32. *Tartars*, typical of all that is savage. Cf. *All's Well That Ends Well*, IV. 4. 7, "through *flinty* Tartar's bosom," i.e. hard-hearted.

33. *To offices*, to do kind acts.

35. *possess'd*, informed; cf. I. 3. 61.

36. Editors note that the 2nd Quarto has *Sabaoth* (=hosts, as in the phrase 'Lord God of Sabaoth') instead of *Sabbath* = rest. As only one Quarto has the error, it is much more likely to have been the printer's than Shakespeare's. *have I sworn*; cf. 226, III. 3. 5.

37. *my bond*; which he has brought with him, and perhaps should hold up at this point.

38, 39. He touches at once on the great argument; cf. III. 2. 273, 274; III. 3. 26-31.

39. This is said as though Venice were like an English city holding a charter from the Crown, and not (as it was) an independent, self-governing state.

41. *carrion*; see G.

42. *I'll not answer that*. "The Jew being asked a question which the law does not require him to answer, stands upon his right, and refuses; but afterwards gratifies his own malignity by such answers as he knows will aggravate the pain of the enquirer"—*Johnson*.

43. *But, say*, but suppose. *my humour*, a whim of mine; or perhaps 'my peculiarity.' See *humour* in the Glossary.

*is it answer'd?* does that answer satisfy you? Cf. 46. Observe his contemptuous repetition of "answer," almost in ridicule of the Duke's notion that he would return "a gentle answer" (34).

46. *baned*, poisoned, literally 'destroyed,' from *bane*, 'destruction.' Cf. *Measure for Measure*, I. 2. 133, "Like *rats* that ravin down their proper *bane*," i.e. devour greedily the poison put for them.

47. *love*; for the omission of the relative, cf. I. 1. 90, 91, note.

*a gaping pig*; "a pig prepared for the table"—*Malone*. He quotes one of Nash's pamphlets, *Pierce Penilesse*: "The causes conducting vnto wrath are as diuers as the actions of a man's life. Some will take on like a mad man, if they see a pigge

come to the table." But Knight was "inclined to think that Shylock alludes to the squeaking of the living animal." Either way Shylock (1. 3. 31) had no liking for pig.

48. Many illustrations of this antipathy might be given.

49. *sings i' the nose*, i.e. makes its nasal squealing.

50. *Cannot contain themselves*. It may be observed that this use of *contain* = 'restrain' is quite Shakespearian; cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, v. 2. 180, 181, "O contain yourself; Your passion draws ears hither."

50-2. The sense turns on the distinction formerly drawn between the *affections* and the *passions*, viz. that the *affections* = the feelings produced by some external object, while the *passions* = the inward impulses: the former come through the senses, the latter "are stirred through the heart" (Furness). An old writer says of a man, "His heart was fuller of passions than his eyes of affections." Now the literal sense of 50-2 is: 'for affection, being the ruler of passion, makes passion serve the mood of its (affection's) likes and dislikes'; or perhaps 'directs passion according to the mood of affection's likes and dislikes.' That is, if some external object (e.g. "a gaping pig" etc.) produces in us a certain feeling of dislike, that feeling is intensified by passion; for passion is always, as it were, at hand to back up 'affection.' The old editions had either *masters* or *maisters*, each probably a printer's misunderstanding of *maistres*, the ancient spelling of *mistress*.

53. *firm*, solid.

56. *woollen bag-pipe*; supposed to mean a bag-pipe of which the bladder was either encased in a woollen cloth or was itself made of skin that had the wool left on. Emendations that have been suggested are *wooden*, referring to the pipe; *swollen* (practically only the difference of a letter *s*); *bollen*, an old word = 'swoln,' which occurs in *Lucrece*, 1417; and *wawling*. It is best to keep *woollen* and take it = 'covered with a woollen case,' e.g. such as baize or some similar cloth.

60. *lodged*, i.e. not to be moved by entreaties. *certain*, fixed.

61. *follow*, pursue; cf. 202. To *prosecute* a man is literally 'to pursue, follow him up' (Lat. *prosequi*).

62. *A losing suit*, one that brings him no gain, but on the contrary loss; for if he would consent to give up the pound of flesh he could have his money back, nay benefit by one of the liberal "offers" (81) which Bassanio has made on Antonio's behalf, and is ready to repeat (84).

64. *To*, able to, fit to.

68. i.e. displeasure does not necessarily amount to hate.

70. *think you question*, remember that you are arguing.

72. *main*; see G. *flood*, sea; as in I. I. 10.

75. *the mountain pines*; appropriate to the Apennines; cf. Vergil's *abies in montibus altis*.

76. *no noise*; strictly *any* after "forbid"; but it is on the same principle as the double negative.

82. *conveniency*, suitable despatch.

87. *draw*. The stage-custom is for Bassanio to hold out towards Shylock a bag containing the ducats. Perhaps Shakespeare had this in his mind's eye when he wrote *draw*, meaning 'draw them out of the bag.'

90. This argument resembles a passage in Silvan's *Orator*. See pp. 169-71. It is a fair argument for Shylock to use, since a slave-owner may be said to deal in human flesh.

92. *in abject...parts*, for low, menial duties.

100. *dearly bought*. Shylock means perhaps that it is bought not only with the three thousand ducats but also with all that he has had to suffer at the hands of Antonio and of other Christians too.

104. *Upon*, relying upon; so 'in virtue of.'

121-42. The incident fills the time while the Duke reads the letter.

123, 124. He means that Shylock's soul is so hard that it gives an edge to his knife. "The Jew's soul is supposed, by the figure [of speech], to be the instrument of rendering the edge more keen." Editors compare 2 *Henry IV*, iv. 5. 107:

"Thou hidest a thousand daggers in thy thoughts,  
Which thou hast whetted on thy stony heart."

The quibble on *sole* and *soul* occurs in *Romeo and Juliet*, I. 4. 15. For the point of such quibbles see III. 1. 29.

125. *hangman's*, executioner's; not an uncommon use.

126. *envy*; cf. 10.

128. *inexorable*; literally 'not to be cursed,' which is commonly taken to mean 'beyond cursing, i.e. whom it is no use to curse'; or possibly = 'not to be moved by curses.' The later Folios (3 and 4) have *inexorable*, which many editors adopt.

129. *for thy life*, for letting you live at all. Cf. *The Jew of Malta*, I. 2. 65-7, where the Governor says to Barabas and other Jews:

"through our sufferance of your hateful lives,  
Who stand accursed in the sight of Heaven,  
These taxes and afflictions are befallen" [us].

130. *in my faith*, as a Christian.

131. *To*, so as to. *Pythagoras*; the Greek philosopher of the 6th century B.C. supposed to have first taught the doctrine of



the transmigration of souls, e.g. that the souls of some human beings pass after their death into animals and those of animals into some men. Compare *Twelfth Night*, iv. 2. 54-60:

"*Clown*. What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild-fowl?

*Malvolio*. That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.

*Clown*. What thinkest thou of his opinion?

*Malvolio*. I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion."

134, 135. It certainly seems as if, while Gratiano "*says a wolf*," he were really "*thinking of a wolfish man*" (note in Furness's ed.).

*who...his*. The same irregularity of construction as in i. 3. 125, 126, *who* being a *nominativus pendens*. Abbott, however, takes *who hang'd* as a nominative absolute = 'and he being hanged, his soul did fly' etc.

138. *starved*; see G.

139-42. Shylock speaks very slowly (note the drawling effect of the monosyllables, especially in 139), to show that Gratiano's outburst has not made the faintest impression on him. He holds the bond out in his left hand and with the knife in his right points to the seal (perhaps lightly touches it, as I have seen an actor do).

140. *offend'st*, dost damage.

142. *cureless*, incurable. *I stand...for*; cf. 103. *law*; said with emphasis, implying that he is not there to enjoy Gratiano's "wit."

153. *doctor*, i.e. of law; cf. *doctor* = learned man. It is not till the Trial-scene that we get the full revelation of Portia's character in all its strength and variety.

160, 161. *no impediment to let him lack* etc., no hindrance so as to cause him to lack due esteem and respect. The style of the letter is intentionally legal and inelegant.

165. *You hear...Bellario, what he writes*. The same idiom—the dependent clause being a second object explanatory of the first—as in *Luke* iv. 34, "I know thee who thou art."

*Enter Portia*. Her robes (Bellario's) would be those of the degree of Doctor of Civil Law of Padua University, and very fine they were, according to the description.

169, 170. *the difference* etc., the dispute which is now the matter of discussion.

176-8. *in such rule*, so regular; his procedure so far has observed all legal requirements. *impugn*, oppose, resist. *danger*, power; see G.

182. *strain'd*. She lays some stress on the word (=constrained, forced), which echoes and reproves Shylock's "On what *compulsion must I?*"

183. Editors quote *Ecclesiasticus* xxxv. 20, "Mercy is seasonable in the time of affliction, as clouds of rain in the time of drought."

184. *blessed*, full of blessing; like *guiled*, full of guile, III. 2. 97.

186, 187. Bacon's *Essay* on Revenge has been compared: "In taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior: *for it is a Prince's part to pardon.*"

188-90. "The sceptre of a king is the symbol of that earthly power which is the essential characteristic of awe-inspiring majesty and which makes kings dreaded and feared."

*attribute*; in apposition to "power," not "sceptre." *Power*, she says, is the attribute of monarchs, *Mercy* the attribute of God (191-3); *wherein* also refers to *power*. A close parallel to this passage (186-91) is *Measure for Measure*, II. 2. 59-63.

194, 195. *seasons*, tempers. Editors quote illustrations of the sentiment from various writers, e.g. the play *Edward III* (1596):

"And kings approach the nearest unto God  
By giving life and safety unto men."

197. *in the course of justice*, i.e. if strict justice were to take its course.

198. It has been objected that Portia's "referring the Jew to the Christian doctrine of salvation and the Lord's Prayer is a little out of character." But the objection is mistaken. For (1) the Lord's Prayer itself is composed of expressions familiar to the Jew, "putting together, in a short form, all that was most valuable in the Jewish liturgies," (2) the Scriptures contain many other passages recommending mercy, e.g. *Ecclesiasticus* xxviii., and (3) "certainly it is not correct to suppose that the Christian *doctrine* of salvation is not also the doctrine of salvation to the faithful Jew" (note in Furness).

200, 201. A fine point brought out in the representation of the play is that while all in the Court are moved by this most famous appeal, Shylock—alone—remains stonily indifferent, casting now and then a casual glance about him.

204. *My deeds*; echoing her words "The deeds of mercy" (200). Shylock's imprecation is thought to be adapted from that of the Jews to Pilate, *Matthew* xxvii. 25.

206. *discharge*; cf. III. 2. 268.

208. *twice*; altered by some to *thrice*, because of Portia's words in 225. But *twice* corresponds with Bassanio's own offer in 84, and we may suppose that Portia increases the offer in 225.

212. *bears down*, crushes. *truth*, honesty. Bassanio means that Shylock is seeking to make an unfair use of the law, and

use it as an instrument for enforcing his malicious purpose. So Bassanio now appeals to the Duke (or, as some say, Portia) to defeat this scheme by setting aside the strict letter of the law for "once" (213). Let Equity, he pleads, prevail over Law—a time-honoured plea.

216-20. The voice is Portia's but the arguments Bellario's. The objection as to the danger of an evil precedent takes higher ground than Antonio's argument in III. 3. 26-31.

221, 222. *A Daniel!...O young judge!* "Daniel, according to the *History of Susannah and the Elders*, v. 45, was a 'young youth' when he convicted the Elders 'of false witness by their own mouth.' His detection also of the imposture of the priests of Bel, as we read in the Apocryphal *History of Bel and the Dragon*, may have contributed to suggest the propriety of the allusion" (note in Furness). Hunter thinks that the name Daniel was proverbial for "an eminent judge," and quotes a letter written in 1595: "Madam, I do wish you one other Daniel to decide your doubts, according to your good deserts."

224. Here he hands the bond to Portia, showing his confidence in the "wise young judge."

225. She makes the offer before she looks at the bond.

246. *Hath full relation to*; quite applies to, justifies. This is her decision of the great point, viz. that the contract *is* legal according to the law of Venice. *Hath*; singular because the two subjects = one idea; cf. III. 3. 31.

249. *more elder*. Emphatic double comparatives and superlatives are not uncommon in Shakespeare.

253. *balance*; a singular form used as plural for sake of euphony. This frequently happens with nouns "in which the singular ends in -s, se, ss, ce, and ge"—*Abbott*.

254. *I have them ready*, i.e. concealed in his long cloak, from which he now takes them out.

260. She makes no further appeal to Shylock. She has given him in vain more than one chance to "be merciful" (just as Henry V gives the conspirators in *Hen. V*, II. 2), and now he has refused even this last small "charity." The purpose of these opportunities and refusals is to alienate our sympathy from him, in view of the close.

273. This is very like Hamlet's farewell to Horatio (*Hamlet*, v. 2. 355-60).

*speak fair*; commonly = 'speak kindly to,' here 'speak well of.'

276. *Repent not*, do not grieve. It seems characteristic of the generous Antonio to wish that his friend's happiness should not be clouded by painful thoughts; cf. 264. For *not* (Folio) the Quartos have *but* = 'only grieve a little for me and I shall etc.'

279. *with all my heart*; a sad jest like the dying Gaunt's. See III. I. 29, note. Possibly a quibble was intended above in 270 ("cut").

281. *Which*; with personal antecedent.

293-5. Apparently he was about to say 'a daughter whom I would not sacrifice were I in the place of these Christian husbands'; and then the remembrance that she has a "Christian husband" makes him break off into "Would [that] any" etc. For the scansion *Bárrábás*, cf. *The Jew of Malta*, where it is always *Bárabás* (one r), e.g. in I. I. 161, "Why, Bárabás, they come for peace or war."

302. *Come, prepare!* This is the climax. Shylock advances upon Antonio, but Portia steps between.

307. *in the cutting it*; a combination of constructions, verbal noun (with *of*) + present participle.

309. *confiscate*; see G. The knowledge of Venetian law shown here and in 324-30 and 345-60 represents, of course, Bellario's "opinion" (156).

311. There is no other character present from whom the retort (cf. 244) could come so well as from the 'rattling' Gratiano.

316. *this offer*; perhaps pointing to the ducats that Bassanio (84) had brought into Court (though strictly they amounted to *twice* the debt); or *this* may be defined by what follows. The 3rd Quarto has *his* (Bassanio's), and it is tempting.

319. *all justice*, all the justice he is entitled to, and nothing but justice.

325. *just*, exact = Lat. *justus*. See p. 169.

326. *in the substance*; connect with *of the twentieth part*—e.g. 'too light or heavy by a whole  $\frac{1}{20}$ th of a scruple (i.e. a grain) or by a fraction of  $\frac{1}{20}$ th.' The rhythm indicates an antithesis between *substance* and *division*.

329. *in the estimation of*, by the difference of, i.e. in weight.

332. *Now*; emphatic. Gratiano's despised "wit" (141) has its turn. *on the hip*. By a touch of "irony" Shakespeare makes him use Shylock's own phrase, I. 3. 43.

333. An anxious "pause" surely for Antonio and his friends: for what if Shylock sacrificed all to his lust of revenge?

339. One of the lines of the play that have become proverbial.

342. *so*; as she has described.

344. *question*, argument, discussion; cf. the verb in 70.

347. *an alien*; as Shylock was, being a Jew.

350. *contrive*, plot.

353. *in*; not *at*, because *in the mercy of* was considered = the legal Lat. *in misericordia*, in the power of. See *mercy* in G.

The language throughout the speech has a legal character, and no doubt she is quoting, more or less, the words of the Act (346).

360. *formerly*, above; a legal use. *rehearsed*, described.

370. i.e. which penalty of forfeiting half your property to the State at large you may make us reduce to a fine by humbly begging for mercy.

372-5. The complaint of Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, 1. 2. 138-51, is somewhat similar, though more diffuse and less effective.

379. *quit*, remit, i.e. not exact the fine which the Duke spoke of. The State, that is, will get nothing at all.

381. Probably *in use* = in trust, from a legal phrase *in usum* peculiar to the 'conveyancing' of land; and Antonio means in trust for Lorenzo and Jessica, whose finances one feels would not otherwise be very flourishing. At Shylock's death the trust is to cease, so that all his property will eventually go to them (386-8). Some editors explain "in trust for *Shylock*, for life." But why should Antonio trouble about Shylock, who is to retain the half of his property which the State could claim, and according to this proposal (379) not even pay a fine?

Johnson says: "The terms proposed have been misunderstood. Antonio declares that, as the Duke quits one-half of the forfeiture, he is likewise content to abate his claim, and desires not the property but the *use* or produce only of the half and that only for the Jew's life, unless we read, as perhaps is right, 'upon *my* death'." But it is not like the generous Antonio to seek his own advantage. He seems from the rest of the speech to be much more concerned with Lorenzo's interest. Nor is it at all probable that *in use* = put out to interest, i.e. for Antonio's benefit (though *use* sometimes has this sense in Shakespeare). For we have seen (1. 3.) how strongly Antonio was opposed to "usance."

385. *presently*, at once; cf. 402.

386. *record*, set down in writing, sign his name to.

391-8. Furness quotes a description of Edmund Kean's representation of Shylock at this moment of his terrible abasement: "The sudden change of Shylock's whole appearance when the cause turned against him; the happy pause in 'I am—content,' as if it almost choked him to bring out the word; the partial bowing down of his inflexible will when he said, 'I pray you give me leave to go from hence, *I am not well*'; the horror of his countenance when told of his enforced conversion to Christianity, and, to crown all, the fine mixture of scorn and pity with which he turned and surveyed the ribald

Gratiano,—all exhibited a succession of studies to which words fail to do justice. He retired with the audience possessed in his favour." Did Bassanio remember that scornful "I will not pray with you"?

397. *ten more*; making up a jury of 12. To call the jury who tried a man his '12 godfathers' was an old piece of jesting. Malone quotes from an old *Dialogue* (1564), "I did see him aske blesinge to xii godfathers at once."

400. *desire...of*. In this common expression *desire* = 'ask, entreat' (as often in Shakespeare), and *of* = 'as regards'; so the literal sense is 'I entreat you in respect of excusing me.'

404. *gratify*; a courteously vague expression for 'reward.'

408-10. i.e. in return for which we requite your gracious labour with the ducats that were owed to Shylock. Really, he offers Portia her own money, and afterwards (428) disparages her own gift to him! Perfect 'irony'; so again in 417. *cope*; see G.

424, 425. Probably this arrangement is correct, yet Lamb thought that she addressed Bassanio alone. No doubt, she had laid her plans beforehand, knowing that if she succeeded in saving Antonio, Bassanio would press some reward on her, or rather on the "doctor of Rome" *this ring*; cf. III. 2. 171-4.

429. *to give*; a gerundial infinitive = in or by doing so; from the old locative sense of *to* = at, in.

443. *An if*; see *an* in G.

449. *commandment*; equivalent to four syllables = commandment, as the word is spelt in the original editions.

453. *presently*, at once.

Note: Some general remarks upon points in the Trial-scene will be found later, pp. 177-80.

## SCENE II

1. *this deed*; cf. IV. 1. 386-8, 392-5.

6. *upon more advice*, on further consideration. See *advise* in G.

13, 14. Note the tact of not repeating the incident and situation in the case of the minor pair. On the other hand, in Act v. the complication begins with them, to lead up to the tension between the others.

15. *old swearing*; hard swearing. For this colloquial use of *old* to give emphasis = "plentiful, abundant, great" (Dyce), cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. 4. 5, "here will be an *old* abusing of God's patience and the king's English." Similar is the slang phrase 'a high old time of it.'

## ACT V

## SCENE I

The opening (1-126) of this scene is designedly a contrast to the Trial-scene. The cool air of the country, the moonlight and music (66-8), the restful and poetic tone of the lover's converse, afford an exquisite relief after the hot, thronged law-court and its fierce conflict of passions. And the lyric beauty of it all heightens the *romantic* impression which the love-story of Lorenzo and Jessica is meant to make, as a foil to the graver love of Portia and Bassanio.

The number of monosyllables in 1-6 gives a simplicity and slowness of rhythm obviously meant to suggest the soft stillness of the night.

1-14. The allusions and descriptions here appear to have been suggested partly by Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, partly by Chaucer. Hunter indeed suggested that "the old folio of Chaucer was lying open before Shakespeare when he wrote this dialogue, and that there he found Thisbe, Dido, and Medea, as well as Troilus. It is at least certain that Thisbe, Dido, and Medea do occur together in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, which in the folio immediately follows the *Troilus*."

There is a clear imitation of the passage in an old comedy *Wily Beguiled*, thought to have been written about 1596-7.

4-6. The story of Troilus and Cressida, not really classical since it had its origin in certain late Latin forgeries, was one of the most popular of mediæval tales. It was told in many romances, 'histories' and poems, such as Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Lydgate's *Troy-Book* and Caxton's *Destruction of Troy*. The earliest mediæval version was in the *Roman de Troyes* (12th century) of Benoît de Sainte-Maur, who first describes how the Trojan priest Calchas, having deserted to the Greek camp before Troy and left his daughter behind, persuaded the Greeks to exchange the Trojan hero Antenor for her; and how she was brought to the Greek camp by Diomedes, and eventually preferred him to her old Trojan lover Troilus, son of Priam king of Troy, thereby becoming a type of the faithless woman. In this *Roman* she is called *Briseida* = *Briseis*, the captive of Achilles; when Boccaccio retold the tale in his *Filostrato*, the main source of Chaucer's poem, he changed *Briseida* into *Griseida*, which is not far from Chaucer's form *Criseyde*.

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* seems to have been preceded by more than one play on the subject.

4. *Troilus*; a dissyllable (*Trōilus*), as the spelling *Troylus* in the original editions shows; through a false derivative, it is thought, from *Troy*. So always in Shakespeare; cf. *Lucrece*, 1486, "Here manly Hector faints, here Trōilus swoonds."

*mounted the Trojan walls*. Editors note that this is a reminiscence of Chaucer's line about Troilus, "Upon the wallis fast eke would he walke," *Troilus and Criseyde*, v. 666.

5. *sigh'd his soul*. The alliteration is a beautiful example of the "sound echoing the sense."

6. *lay*, lodged, dwelt; a common use then. When the Queen on one of her royal 'progresses' (tours) through England stayed at a place, she was said to *lie* there. Cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. 2. 63, "the court lay at Windsor." And *lie* was used of an ambassador's living abroad: hence the quibbling definition of an ambassador as "an honest man sent to *lie* abroad for the good of his country" (made by Sir Henry Wotton, an Elizabethan diplomatist).

6-9. The story of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' of Babylon is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, iv. 55-166. It forms the subject of the affecting piece played by Bottom and his colleagues in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. There Thisbe comes by moonlight to the tomb of Ninus where she had agreed to meet Pyramus, hears a lion roar close by, flies and drops her mantle, which the lion (whose mouth is still stained with the blood of an ox) tears up; Pyramus arrives later, finds the torn, blood-stained mantle, supposes Thisbe to be dead, so stabs himself; later she returns, finds him dead, and stabs *herself*. This also was a favourite tale, told by Chaucer (*Legend of Thisbe of Babylon*).

7. *fearfully*, timidly, in fear; a commoner sense in Shakespeare than the other, viz. 'terribly.'

9-12. *Dido...Carthage*. After the fall of Troy, Æneas came to the court of Dido, queen of Carthage, who fell in love with him; when he sailed away to Italy, she burned herself on a pyre, through grief at his desertion. Vergil tells the story in the first books of the *Æneid*. There was a play on the subject by Marlowe and Peele (1594).

As the classical writers have nothing parallel to this description of Dido standing on the sea-shore, but on the contrary say that she sent her sister Anna to entreat Æneas to stay, it has been thought that Shakespeare has transferred to Dido what Chaucer, following Ovid, says of *Ariadne*, whom Theseus deserted on the island of Naxos:



"And to the stronde barefote faste she went,

No man she sawe, and yet shone the moone,  
And hye upon a rokke she went soone  
And sawe hys barge saylynge in the see.

Hire kercheffe on a pole styked shee,  
Ascaunce that he shulde hyt wel ysee,  
And hym remembre that she was benynde,  
And turne agayne, and on the stronde hire fynde."

10. *willow*; a symbol of unhappy love; cf. the old ballad "Sing willow, willow," *Othello*, iv. 3. 41-56. Some have objected that the idea is comparatively modern, not classical.

11. *wild*; qualifying *sea*. *waft her love*, waved, beckoned, to her lover. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 4. 78, "It *wafts* me still" (Folio reading, Quartos *waves*); said of the Ghost beckoning Hamlet apart. The *ed* of the preterite or p. p. is often omitted for euphony with verbs ending in *t*; cf. *The Tempest*, i. 2. 211 [all] "*Plunged* in the foaming brine, and *quit* the vessel," i.e. *quitted*. *her love*, Æneas.

12-14. Ovid narrates in the *Metamorphoses*, vii. 162, *et seq.*, the story of Medea the wife of Jason restoring his father Æson to youthful vigour by her skill in magic: how, having gathered herbs by moonlight, with incantations, she made therefrom a potion, opened a vein in the old man's neck to let out his blood, and poured in her magic juice, and also gave him some to drink. It was an old notion that plants were specially hable to the moon's 'influence' during certain of her phases and if gathered then possessed peculiar 'virtues.'

*enchanted*; over which she had spoken her spells.

16. *unthrift*, good for nothing.

28. *Stephano*. Here *Stephāno*; in *The Tempest*, v. 277 ("Is not this Stéphanō, my drunken butler?") more correctly *Stéphanō*, Lat. *Stephānus*, not *Stephānus*.

31. *holy crosses*; crosses and wayside shrines such as are common on the Continent in Catholic countries. Cf. 114 and III. 4. 27-32.

33. *a holy hermit*. He does not appear.

39. *Sola, sola!* etc. Launcelot is imitating the notes of a post-horn, having just seen the "post," i.e. messenger, from Bassanio. For a courier to wear a horn was certainly an English custom of old, if not an Italian.

47. *his horn*, i.e. post-horn; but said perhaps with a quibbling reference to the 'horn of plenty,' *cornucopia*.

54. *this bank*; the "bank of flowers" on which the Player

King in *Hamlet*, III. 2. 145, lies down; Titania's "flowery bed," *A Midsummer-N. D.* IV. 1. 1. The Elizabethan theatre-proprietor Henslowe mentions in his *Diary* "two mossy banks" among his stage-properties. See *Shakespeare's England* (1916), II. 269, 270.

57. *Become*, suit, accord with. *touches*, strains.

58, 59. The metaphor of a pavement in some sanctuary, such as the chancel of a church, inlaid with mosaic.

59. *patines*. He means the stars, comparing them to golden plates of metal. "A *patine* (from *patina*, Lat.) is the small flat dish or plate used with the chalice in the administration of the Eucharist. It was commonly made of gold."

The sacred associations of the word, now spelt *paten*, make it harmonise beautifully with a metaphor drawn from the pavement of a chancel.

The Folios have *patterns*—as though the stars were laid out in designs on the surface of the heaven, like the pattern of a carpet or ornamental floor. This seems a commonplace metaphor compared with the other; but some adopt it.

60-5. An allusion to the notion, said to have originated with Pythagoras and described by Plato in the *Republic* (x. 616, 617), of the "music of the spheres." As *popularly* understood and referred to, it was that the rapid revolution of each planet in its "sphere" or orbit (i.e. a circular space round the central Earth) produced a sound, and the combination of the sounds a harmony. Poetry is full of allusions to "the great sphere-music of stars and constellations" (Tennyson, *Parnassus*). It was a favourite idea with Milton (who studied the Ptolemaic theory of the "spheres" deeply and adopted it for the astronomical system of *Paradise Lost*). Cf. *The Nativity Ode*, 125-32, the Ode *At a Solemn Music*, *Arcades*, 62-73 (where he imitates Plato closely), *Comus*, 1021. It has been thought that Shakespeare here has in mind (note "sings") not only the classical idea of "sphere-music" but also the Scriptural conception of "the morning stars singing together," *Job xxxviii. 7*.

60. *orb*, celestial body.

61. *But* = which does not.

*in his motion*, in moving through the heaven.

62. *Still*, ever, always. *quiring to*, singing in concert with.

*cherubins*; see G.

*young-eyed*. Schmidt says "having the fresh look of youth."

But I feel sure that the sense is 'with sight ever young, i.e. keen, undimmed,' and that Shakespeare alludes to the traditional belief in the wondrous power of vision possessed by the Cherubim. Mediæval tradition divided the Heavenly beings

into nine Orders forming three Hierarchies, and invested each Order with some peculiar faculty or function. The first Hierarchy comprised the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones, and the attribute of the Cherubim was a peculiar power of seeing, which enabled them beyond all others of the Hierarchies to enjoy the *Visio Beatifica* or faculty of "contemplating" the Deity. This belief was originally due to Ezekiel's description of the Cherubim as being "full of eyes round about them," *Ezekiel* i. 18 (and x. 12). In the three other places where Shakespeare mentions the Cherubim the notion of sight is introduced, viz. *Hamlet*, iv. 3. 50, *Macbeth*, i. 7. 22-4, *Troilus and Cressida*, iii. 2. 74, 75; so that one can scarcely doubt the allusion. Milton makes use of the same tradition in *Paradise Lost*, where the Cherubim are essentially the "watchful" powers (xi. 128), and always act as sentinels. We must remember that these traditions about the Heavenly Orders were quite familiar to people in Shakespeare's time. (This explanation of "young-eyed cherubins" was suggested by a writer in *Notes and Queries*, vii. 11. 323.)

The songs of the Cherubim with which the music of the "orb" blends are, I suppose, part of the Heavenly worship of the Almighty:

"Where the bright Seraphim, in burning row,  
Their loud uplifted angel trumpets blow;  
And the *Cherubic* host, in thousand *quires*,  
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires"—

Milton, *At a Solemn Music*, 10-13.

63-5. i.e. there is in the immortal part of man, the soul, a harmony like that of the "spheres," but so long as his gross mortal body encloses and deadens the sound of this harmony within him he cannot hear it. Perhaps the full train of thought (60-5) in Lorenzo's mind is: 'everyone of those stars up there makes as it moves a music which we do not hear: how should we? when the similar harmony in our own souls is not perceptible to our dull sense.' I think that each *it* in 65 must refer to the same thing, viz. "harmony," though some would refer the first *it* ("close *it* in") to "soul."

Some interpret the whole passage to mean simply: 'immortal souls can hear the harmony of the spheres, but we mortals cannot, while enclosed in these trammels of the flesh.'

For the thought in 63 editors compare Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, v.: "Touching musical harmony, whether by instrument or by voice,...such is the force thereof, and so pleasing effects it hath in that very part of man which is most divine, that some

have been thereby induced to think, that the soul itself by nature is or hath in it harmony." The doctrine that the soul is a harmony is said to be Pythagorean. Plato in the *Phaedo* compares the soul to harmony. See the *Glosse* to the *Shepheards Calender, October*.

66. *Diana*, the Roman goddess = Greek Artemis; she became identified with Luna, the goddess of the moon, as Artemis was with the Greek moon-goddess Selene (Gk. *σελήνη*, the moon).

72. *unhandled*, untrained, not broken in. Editors compare *The Tempest*, iv. 1. 176-8, for a similar description of the effect of music upon "unback'd colts" (i.e. unbroken in). It is the soothing power of music that Shakespeare usually emphasises.

73. *Fetch* used of motions means 'to make' or 'take'; from its ordinary notion of 'coming back to the same spot.'

77. *mutual*, common; shared by all, not (as strictly) 'reciprocated.' Schmidt gives other examples, e.g. "Till mutual overthrow of mortal kind," i.e. the common destruction of mankind, *Venus and Adonis*, 1018.

79, 80. *Orpheus*; the famous musician of Greek mythology, son of the Muse Calliope. "Presented with the lyre of Apollo, and instructed by the Muses in its use, he enchanted with its music not only the wild beasts, but the *trees and rocks* upon Olympus [the mountain in Thrace where he was brought up], so that they *moved* from their places to follow the sound of his golden harp"—*Classical Dictionary*. Cf. the pretty song in *Henry VIII*, iii. 1, "Orpheus with his lute" (a sort of lyre). The stories about Orpheus are told by many classical writers, but by "the poet" Shakespeare probably meant Ovid, having in mind the account in his favourite *Metamorphoses*, x., xi.

82. *his*, its.

83-8. Not, of course, to be taken literally as a deliberate expression of Shakespeare's own opinion, though it does, I think, indicate his love of music, technical terms of which he uses often and accurately.

85. *fit for treasons, stratagems*; like the conspirator Cassius, of whom Caesar says, "he hears no music," and adds, "such men...are dangerous," *Julius Caesar*, I. 2. 204, 210. *spoils*, spoilings, thefts.

86. *The motions*, all the workings of.

87. *Erebus*; in classical mythology the name of a region of utter darkness between Earth and Hades; hence used = 'hell.'

95. *his state*, the dignity (or pomp) of the "substitute."

98. *music*, band of musicians. The household of a great Elizabethan noble always included a private band.

99. *without respect*, without reference to surrounding conditions; everything owes something of its goodness to favourable circumstances, as music to perfect silence and undivided attention.

104. *she*; poetic tradition (due to the classical story of Philomela who was turned into a nightingale) makes the bird feminine; but really the songster is the male bird; so Milton says *he* of the nightingale, *Paradise Lost*, v. 40, 41.

109. The original editions all have *Peace, how*, making Portia say 'hush' to Nerissa and then exclaim "how the moon!" etc. But almost all editors change to *Peace, ho!* for the following reasons (Dyce):

"1. Shakespeare would hardly have employed such a phrase as 'how *the moon sleeps with Endymion*,' &c.;—he would have interposed some adverb (or adverbial adjective) between 'how' and '*the moon*,' &c.: so previously in this scene (54) we have 'How *sweet* the moonlight sleeps.' 2. *Ho* was often written with the spelling *how*.... 3. That Portia is enjoining the musicians to be silent, is proved by the stage-direction of the old eds., '*Music ceases*.' So in *Julius Cæsar*, I. 2. 1, *Casca silences the music* with '*Peace, ho!* Cæsar speaks.' 4. It is quite natural that immediately after the command '*Peace, ho!*' we should have the reason for that command, viz. '*the moon sleeps with Endymion*,' &c.: while, on the contrary, there is...an 'oddness' in '*Peace*' being followed by a mere exclamation."

*Endymion*; "a youth distinguished by his beauty, and renowned in ancient story for his perpetual sleep.... As he slept on Latmus, his surprising beauty warmed the cold heart of Selene (the moon), who came down to him and kissed him"—*Classical Dictionary*. Lyly's play *Endimion* (1591) must have made the legend specially familiar to the Elizabethans. To modern readers it is perhaps most familiar in Keat's *Endymion*.

112, 113. Referring, doubtless, to some proverbial saying.

121. Stage-direction: *tucket*; see G.

122. *I hear his trumpet*. It seems as if formerly each person had his own trumpet-note like his private crest. Cf. *King Lear*, II. 4. 185, 186: "*Cornwall*. What trumpet's that? *Regan*. I know't, my sister's."

127. i.e. we should have daylight at the same time as the people on the opposite side of the globe. Bassanio, of course, has heard Portia's last words, and she in reply (129) catches up his idea that her presence (or perhaps her eyes in particular) might be as the sun in "giving light." *Antipodes*; see G.

129, 130. For the quibble on *light*, cf. II. 6. 42, III. 2. 91.

*heavy*, of heart.

132. *sort*, dispose.

136. *sense*, reason.

141. *breathing courtesy*, courtesy consisting in mere words; cf. "courteous breath," II. 9. 89.

142. Here we revert to the ring-incident, which serves to round off the play merrily. Of course Portia and Nerissa have arranged that the latter should start the subject. Besides their quick woman's wit they have the advantage of being prepared, and play into each other's hands. The treatment of the incident is a perfect specimen of dramatic "irony"—the effect, that is, whether tragic (as so often in the Greek drama) or comic, which arises through the audience knowing some important fact which the characters, or some of them, do not know. That Gratiano's protestations to Nerissa that he gave the ring to a boy "no higher than *thyself*" (163) has for the audience a comic effect of which, naturally, the speaker is quite unconscious.

148. "The *poesy* or *posy* (for the two words are the same) of a ring was a motto or rhyme inscribed upon its inner side. The fashion of putting such 'posies' on rings prevailed from the middle of the 16th to the close of the 17th centuries. In 1624 a little book was published with the quaint title, *Love's Garland, or Posies for Rings, Handkerchiefs, and Gloves; and such pretty tokens, that lovers send their loves*. Lyly, in his *Euphues*, Part Second, 1597, hopes that the ladies will be favourable to his work, 'writing your judgments as you do the Posies in your rings, which are always next to the finger, not to be seene of him that holdeth you by the hand, and yet knowne by you that weare them on your hands'."—(Rolfe's note.) Similarly short-rhymed couplets were inscribed on knives—cf. 149, 150. The form *poesy* accounts for the scansion.

156. *respective*, careful.

162. *scrubbed*; as we say, *scrubby* = mean-looking. Dyce quotes Cotgrave's *Dictionary* (1611), "An ill-favoured scrub, a little ugly or swartie wretch." Literally *scrubbed* = stunted; *scrub* (as in 'scrub oak') being the same as *shrub*, a low growing tree. But as a term of contempt the word conveyed the two ideas "little" and "ugly."

"The scornful way in which Gratiano talks of the disguised Nerissa increases the humour of the Scene"—*Halliwell*.

170. Here of course Bassanio gets alarmed, feeling that his turn is coming; nor is Gratiano sorry, as he should be made to show.

172. *leave*, part with, give away.

177. *I were best*. See note on II. 8. 33.

193-202. Editors cite similar cases of the repetition of a

word at the end of a line in Elizabethan plays, e.g. in the pseudo-Shakespearian *Edward III*, II. 1, where eight consecutive lines end with "the sun."

195. *would conceive*, would only understand.

199. *virtue*, real worth: "the power it has; the right to me and mine of which it is the pledge"—*Rolfe*. See III. 2. 171-3. To emphasise the gravity of his offence she speaks as if the ring had had some magic power or "virtue." Cf. *The Faerie Queene*, IV. 2. 39, 40, where we read of a ring that had "the great virtue" of staunching wounds, and *Il Penseroso*, 103, "the virtuous ring," one of its *virtues* being that it enabled its wearer to understand the language of birds.

203. Said with a humorous emphasis on *man*.

205. *wanted*. The elliptical form of the sentence really comes, I think, from the common omission of the relative after 'there is' (203). Thus 'what man is there wanted' = 'who wanted' would be quite Shakespearian, and the sentence follows this type, ignoring the "so...unreasonable." But some explain it simply 'as to have wanted.'

206. i.e. as to press his request for a thing regarded as a sacred possession. *held*; implying perhaps 'withheld, retained,' as well as 'regarded.' *ceremony*; scan *c'remony*.

216. "It indicates the gentleman and the soldier in Bassanio that he does not expose Antonio as the one that 'enforced' him to give the ring" (note in Furness).

218. *My honour*; glancing at what Portia said, 201.

220. Shakespeare compares the stars with candles more than once; cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, III. 5. 9, "Night's candles are burnt out," and *Macbeth*, II. 1. 5. Marlow is rather fond of terming them "the lamps of heaven"; 2 *Tamburlaine*, II. 4. 18, III. 4. 77, V. 3. 3.

228. *be...advised*; cf. II. 1. 42.

231. *Sir, grieve not you*. She sees that the jest has gone far enough, and is making Antonio's position uncomfortable; so with her perfect tact she adopts a lighter tone (235-8), the first step towards dropping the jest altogether.

237. *double*; quibbling on its secondary meaning 'full of duplicity, deceit.'

241. *wealth*, well-being, welfare; see G.

243. *miscarried*; a euphemism, as in II. 8. 29.

244. *My soul*; not merely his "body" (241).

245. *advisedly*, deliberately.

265. *You shall not know*. This prevents explanations which would introduce a new subject distracting attention.

*by what strange accident*. Really the dramatist's way of fore-

stalling the criticism that it *is* rather strange that Portia should have received the information which is unknown to Antonio himself.

267. *Were you the doctor?* But for the incident of the rings Portia would have had no proof to offer that she *was* the lawyer—at any rate, no proof nearly as good; so that the episode has really a very close relation to the main story of the play.

269. *living*, the means of living; cf. III. 2. 156.

271. *to road*, to harbour; cf. I. I. 19.

281. *And charge us there* etc., and if you question us there on oath. The couplet is a last echo of the legal lore which had carried the young “doctor” so brilliantly through the Trial-scene. The reference is to the special power (called “scraping the conscience”) of the old Court of Chancery to “interrogate” (i.e. examine) a defendant on oath. This legal point is explained in *Shakespeare's England* (1916), I. 395.

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Ruskin says: “Shakespeare has no heroes—he has only heroines.” Looking back, would you agree with this criticism as applied to *The Merchant of Venice*?



## GLOSSARY

### *Abbreviations:—*

A.S. = Anglo-Saxon, i.e. English down to about the Conquest.

Middle E. = Middle English, i.e. English from about the Conquest to about 1500.

Elizabethan E. = the English of Shakespeare and his contemporaries (down to about 1650).

O.F. = Old French, i.e. till about 1600. F. = modern French.

Germ. = modern German. Gk. = Greek.

Ital. = Italian. Lat. = Latin.

**NOTE:** In using the Glossary the student should pay very careful attention to the context in which each word occurs.

*accoutre*, III. 4. 63. F. *accoutrer*, 'to dress, array'; perhaps from O.F. *coustre*, a sacristan who had *custody* of the vestments of a church and helped the priest to put them on; cf. Lat. *custos*, 'a guardian.'

*achieve*, III. 2. 208, 'to win, gain'; from the notion 'to bring things successfully to a head' = O.F. *achever*, from Lat. *ad*, 'to' + *caput*, 'a head.'

*address*, II. 9. 19, 'to prepare'; cf. *The Winter's Tale*, IV. 4. 53, "Address yourself to entertain them sprightly." Literally 'to put straight'; O.F. *adressier*, Late Lat. *addrectiare*, from *directus*, 'straight.'

*advise*, II. 1. 42. Cf. the reflexive use = 'to consider, reflect' (F. *s'aviser*), as in I *Chronicles* xxi. 12, "advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him" (Revised Version 'consider'). So *advice* (IV. 2. 6) and *advisement* = 'consideration.'

*afeard*, II. 9. 95; used by Shakespeare in the same sense as *afraid*. The words are distinct: *afeard* being the past participle of *afear*, 'to frighten,' A.S. *aféran*, in which *a-* is an intensive prefix; and *afraid* the p. p. of *affray*, from O.F. *effraier* = Low Lat. *exfrediare*, 'to break the peace, disturb' (cf. Germ. *friede*, 'peace').

*alabaster*, I. 1. 84, sulphate of lime; Gk. *ἀλάβαστρος*, said to be derived from the name of a town, *Alabastron*, in Egypt. Misspelt *alabaster* in the Folio, as commonly in Elizabethan writers.

*allay*; literally 'to mix,' especially liquids or metals (when it is spelt *alloy*); hence 'to temper, qualify.' Cf. *Coriolanus*, II. 1. 52, 53, "a cup of hot wine with not a *drop* of *allaying* Tiber

in't," i.e. not a drop (cf. II. 2. 172) of water to qualify it. Lat. *alligare*, 'to unite.'

an. Note that—(1) *an* is a weakened form of *and* (*d* often drops off from the end of a word: cf. *lawn* = *laund*); (2) *and* = 'if' was a regular use till about 1600. Cf. Bacon, *Essays* (23), "they will set an house on fire, *and* it were but to roast their egges"; *Matthew* xxiv. 48, "But *and* if that evil servant shall say." The 1st Folio (1623) often has *and* where modern texts print *an*; e.g. in I. 2. 42, "*And* you will not."

The phrase *and if* or *an if* (v. 159) really = 'if if,' since *and* or *an* by itself expresses the condition: *if* was added to strengthen it. How *and* or *an* came to have the meaning 'if' is doubtful.

Antipodes, v. 127. Gk. *ἀντιπῶδες*, literally 'men with feet opposite to ours,' from *ἀντίπους* = Gk. *ἀντί*, 'opposite to' + *πούς*, 'a foot.' Hence 'those who are on the opposite side of the globe to ourselves.'

approve, III. 2. 79, 'to justify, make good'; literally 'to bring to the test' (Lat. *ad*, 'to' + *proba*, 'a trial'), and so 'prove.'

argosy, I. 1. 9, 'a large merchant ship'; originally 'a ship of *Ragusa*,' a port on the Adriatic near Venice. The earliest form of the word in E. was *ragusye* = Ital. *ragusea*, 'a Ragusan vessel.' The name of the port itself was transposed to *Aragouse* in Elizabethan E. Dr Murray says there is evidence of Ragusan trade with England in Shakespeare's time, and of "the familiarity of Englishmen with the *Ragusee* [Ital. plural] or large and richly-freighted merchant ships of *Ragusa*." (Not connected with the name of the classical vessel *Argo*.)

aspect, I. 1. 54, II. 1. 8. Shakespeare always accents *aspéct*. Many words now accented on the first syllable were in Elizabethan English accented on the second syllable, i.e. they retained the French accent, which (roughly speaking) was that of the original Latin words. By "accent" one means, of course, the stress laid by the voice on any syllable in pronouncing it. Thus Milton wrote "By policy and long *procéss* of time" (*Par. Lost*, II. 297); cf. French *procès*, Lat. *processus*. So Shakespeare scans *accès*, *commerce*, *édict*, when it suits him.

be. The root *be* was conjugated in the present tense indicative, singular and plural, up till about the middle of the 17th century. The singular, indeed, was almost limited in Elizabethan E. to the phrase "if thou *beest*," where the indicative *beest* has the force of the subjunctive; cf. *The Tempest*, v. 134, "if thou be'st Prospero." For the plural, cf. *Genesis* xlii. 32, "We be twelve brethren," and *Matthew* xv. 14, "they be blind leaders of the blind."

beholding, I. 3. 94, 'indebted'; cf. *Richard II*, IV. 160,

"Little are we beholding to your love." Confused with *beholden* = 'held' and so 'held by a tie of obligation,' i.e. indebted.

**beshrew.** Generally combined with *me* or *my heart*, either as a mild imprecation 'woe to' (cf. III. 2. 14), or for emphasis 'indeed' (cf. II. 6. 52). The original notion was 'to invoke something *shrewd*, i.e. bad, on a person'; see *shrewd*.

**betimes**, III. 1. 19, 'in good time, before it is too late.' From *betime* (literally 'by the time that') + *s* of the adverbial genitive; cf. *besides*.

**bonnet**, I. 2. 67, 'a covering for the head,' equally of men as of women; compare *Lycidas*, 104, "*His* mantle hairy and *his* bonnet sedge."

**bootless**, III. 3. 20, 'useless'; cf. the verb, "it boots not to complain" = 'it is no good to,' *Richard II*, III. 4. 18. From A.S. *bót*, 'advantage, good,' which comes from the same root as *better*, *best*.

**braggart**, III. 2. 253. The suffix *-ard*, softened into *-art*, has a depreciative force in English as in French; cf. *coward*, *drunkard*, *sluggard*. Of German origin—cf. names like *Eberhard*—and originally intensive = 'hard, strong in.'

**carrión**; Low Lat. *caronia*, 'a carcase,' from *caro*, 'flesh.' Properly used of corrupted flesh, hence contemptuously (IV. 1. 41).

**cater-cousin**, II. 2. 119; best explained as = 'a catering cousin,' the word being formed like *foster-mother*: i.e. *cater-cousins* were people who *catered* for each other, in fact boarded together, and were so intimate as to be like relations. Cf. *companion*, literally 'one who eats bread with you' (Lat. *cum* + *panis*). Dr Murray rejects entirely the theory that *cater-cousin* = 'fourth cousin,' i.e. a remote relation, from F. *quatre*.

**cerecloth**, II. 7. 51; properly *cered cloth*, i.e. 'a cloth smeared with or dipped in melted wax, a waxed winding-sheet.' Lat. *cerare*, 'to wax.' There was an old verb to *cere* = 'to wrap in a winding-sheet.'

**charity**, I. 2. 71, IV. 1. 259; in its wide sense 'benevolence, right feeling towards one's fellow-men'; cf. I *Corinthians* xiii., where for 'charity' the Revised Version substitutes 'love,' the Greek being ἀγάπη. From Lat. *carus*, 'dear.'

**cheer**. Properly (1) 'countenance,' as in III. 2. 307; Late Lat. *cara*, face = Gk. *κῆρα*, 'head.' Then (2) 'spirits,' especially high spirits, as the face reflects the feelings. So 'to be of good cheer' (IV. 1. 111) means literally 'to be of a happy countenance,' i.e. in good spirits.

**cherubins**, v. 62. The word 'cherub' comes directly from the Heb. *kherûbh*, and makes its true plural 'cherubim' =

*kherūbīm* (so always in Milton). The form 'Cherubin' comes indirectly through the French (which follows the Latinised form of *kherūbh*) and makes its plural 'Cherubins'; cf. Wyclif, *Exodus* xxv. 18, "two golden Cherubyns." In the Bible of 1611 we have a hybrid form *Cherubims*, changed in the Revised Version to the correct Heb. *Cherubim*. *Kherūbh* is from the Babylonian word for the figure of the winged bull which stood at the door of a house to keep off evil spirits. The Jews probably owed it to the Phoenicians.

*clime*, II. i. 10, 'land, country'; cf. 2 *Henry VI*, III. 2. 84, "Drove back again unto my native clime." Gk. κλίμα, 'a slope,' from κλίνειν, 'to slope.' *Clime* and *climate* are 'doublets,' and each meant 'region,' then 'temperature,' the most important quality of a region.

*complexion*, III. i. 27; an old physiological term for 'the combination of the four "humours" [see p. 159] of the body in a certain proportion'; hence 'the nature, temperament' arising from this combination. Lat. *complexio* used in Late Lat. = 'bodily constitution, habit,' from *complectere*, 'to embrace, combine.'

*conceit*, I. i. 92, 'intellect, mental faculty'; hence 'conception' formed by the mind (III. 4. 2), e.g. a 'fanciful conception, idea' (III. 5. 39). As most people have favourable conceptions of themselves the notion 'self-conceit' came in; cf. *Romans* xii. 16, "Be not wise in your own conceits."

*confiscate*, IV. i. 309. A noticeable point in Elizabethan English is the tendency to make the past participles of verbs of Latin origin conform with the Latin forms. This is the case especially with verbs of which the Latin originals belong to the 1st and 3rd conjugations. Thus Shakespeare and Milton have many participles like 'create' (*creatus*), 'consecrate' (*consecratus*), 'incorporate,' where the termination *-ate*, in modern English *-ated*, = Lat. *-atus*, the passive participial termination of the 1st conjugation.

So with the Latin 3rd conjugation; Latinised participles such as 'deject' (*dejectus*), 'attent' (*attentus*), 'suspect,' 'addict' (*ad-dictus*), 'pollute' (*pollutus*), etc. occur in Shakespeare or Milton.

*cope*; through O.F. from Lat. *colaphus*, 'a blow with the fist,' whence F. *coup*, 'a blow.' So *cope* = (1) 'to come to blows with,' hence (2) 'to meet, encounter,' hence (3) 'to meet or match a thing with an equivalent'—as in IV. i. 410.

*counterfeit*, III. 2. 115, 'likeness, portrait.' To *counterfeit* is 'to make in opposition to' (Lat. *contra* + *facere*): hence 'to imitate,' because one way of 'opposing' a thing is to make something just like it.

**county**, I. 2. 40; cf. *Romeo*, III. 5. 219, "I think it best you married with the *county*," i.e. Count Paris. The *y* (*count-y*) represents the *e* of O.F. *conte*, modern F. *comté* (Lat. *comes*); cf. another Elizabethan form *countee*. Cf. Scott's "County Guy" (*Quentin Durward*).

**cozen**, II. 9. 38. According to the common (but not certain) explanation, to *cozen* a man is to pretend to be his *cousin* for the purpose of getting something out of him; whence 'to cheat.' Cf. F. *cousiner*, which Cotgrave (1611) explains, "to clayme kindred for advantage or particular ends; as he, who to save charges in travelling, goes from house to house, as cosin to the owner of everie one." There was an old phrase 'to make a *cousin* of' = 'to beguile, hoax.'

**danger**; O.F. *danger* = Late Lat. *dominarianum*, 'lordship,' from *dominus*. Dr Murray defines the original sense of *danger* thus: "Power of a lord or master, jurisdiction, dominion; power to dispose of, or to hurt or harm; especially in phrase in (*a person's*) *danger* = within his power or at his mercy; sometimes meaning specially in his debt, or under obligation to him." Portia means (IV. 1. 178) 'within his power to inflict a penalty on you.' For *in danger* = 'in debt' Dr Murray quotes the *Paston Letters* (1461), 399, "I am gretly yn your danger and dette for my pension." Cf. the phrase *out of debt out of danger*.

**discover**, II. 7. 1, 'to lay open to view, reveal'; literally 'uncover,' F. *découvrir*. A frequent word in the stage-directions of plays; cf. Ben Jonson's *Masque of Beauty*, "Here a curtain was drawn [aside] and the scene discovered."

**docked**, I. 1. 27, 'embedded.' The word here has not got its modern idea; it goes back to the original, now obsolete, meaning of the noun *dock*, viz.: "the bed (in the sand or ooze) in which a ship lies dry at low water; the hollow made by a vessel lying in the sand." Of Dutch origin, like many sea-terms.

**doit**, I. 3. 129; originally a small Dutch coin (*dut*) worth about a farthing; cf. *Coriolanus*, v. 4. 60, "I'd not have given a doit."

**ducat**, I. 3. 1. So called because the *ducat* (Italian *ducato*) was first coined in the *duchy* (Lat. *ducatus*) of Apulia and bore the words "sit tibi, Christe, datus, quem tu regis, iste *ducatus*."

**eanling**, I. 3. 76, 'young lamb'; cf. *yeaneling*. "The difference between *ean* and *yeen* is easily explained; in the latter, the prefixed *y-* represents the very common A.S. prefix *ge-*, readily added to any verb without affecting the sense" (*Skeat*). Hence *ean* = A.S. *éanian*: *yeen* = A.S. *ge-éanian*—both meaning 'to bring forth young,' especially lambs. The suffix *-ling* denoted smallness: hence often expressive of either affection, as in *darling*, or contempt, as in *worldling*, *hireling*.

**eke**, III. 2. 23, 'to eke out'; cf. *eke* = 'also,' Germ. *auch*. A nickname is an *ekename* (i.e. an extra one). A.S. *écan*, 'to increase,' is akin to Lat. *augere*.

**fell**, IV. 1. 135; A.S. *fel*, 'fierce, cruel'; akin to *felon*, the older sense of which was 'a fierce, savage man,' then 'one who robbed with violence,' and so any robber.

**fiend**, II. 2. 2; literally 'a hating one,' being the pres. part. of A.S. *feón*, 'to hate'; so 'an enemy.' As 'the fiend' would be Satan, "the Adversary" of man, *fiend* came to mean 'devil.'

**fill-horse**, II. 2. 87, 'shaft-horse.' Skeat says that *fill* is another spelling of *thill*, 'a shaft,' cognate with *deal*, 'a thin board.' Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 2. 47, 48, "An you draw backward, we'll put you i' the fills."

**fleet**, III. 2. 108, IV. 1. 135, 'to fly away swiftly, to flit'; cf. the adj. *fleet* and *fleeting* = 'transitory, inconstant.' "So cares and joys abound, as seasons fleet," 2 *Henry VI*, II. 4. 4. A.S. *fléotan*, 'to float, swim.'

**fond**, II. 9. 27, III. 3. 9, 'foolish,' its old meaning. Hence *fondly* = 'foolishly'; cf. *Lycidas*, 56, "Ay me! I fondly dream." Originally *fond* was the p. p. of a Middle E. verb *fonnen*, 'to act like a fool,' from the noun *fon*, 'a fool.' The root is Scandinavian.

**forfeit**. The verb meant first 'to do wrong,' then 'to lose by wrong doing'; Low Lat. *forisfacere*, 'to act beyond,' i.e. beyond what is right, 'to trespass.' The two main ideas are 'failing to keep an obligation,' and 'penalty' (the natural result of failing).

**gaberdine** or **gabardine**, I. 3. 101, 'a long, loose cloak'; Span. *gabardina*. Also in *The Tempest*, II. 2. 40, 115.

**gear**, I. 1. 110. Literally 'something got ready' (A.S. *gearo*, 'ready,' whence *yare* = 'ready'); hence 'stuff, matter,' as in *fish-gear* = 'tackle'; and so 'matter in hand, business,' the common Shakespearian sense.

**gondola**, II. 8. 8; Italian; diminutive of Ital. *gonda*, 'a boat,' from Gk. *κόρυς*, 'a drinking vessel'; named from the shape.

**gossip**, III. 1. 6; originally = 'a sponsor at baptism'—from *God + sib*, 'related,' i.e. one related to the baptised child in respect of God. Later, as christenings were followed by social gatherings and led to talk, *gossip* got the notion 'a talkative person' (especially woman). An instance of the deterioration of meaning.

**hearsed**, III. 1. 78, 'enclosed in a coffin.' Derived from Lat. *harpex*, 'a harrow,' *hearse* originally meant a triangular frame shaped like a harrow, for holding lights at a church service, especially the services in Holy Week. Later, *hearse* was applied

to the illumination at a funeral, and then to almost everything connected with a funeral. Thus it could signify the dead body, the coffin, the pall covering it, the bier, the funeral car, the service (cf. the Glosse to the *Shepheards Calender*, November), and the grave. Sometimes therefore its exact sense is doubtful.

**heinous**, II. 3. 16; spelt *hainous* in the 1st Folio, as often in old writers, e.g. in the original editions of *Paradise Lost*. F. *haineux*, 'hateful.'

**his**, v. 82; this was the ordinary *neuter* (as well as masculine) possessive pronoun in Middle E. and remained so in Elizabethan E. Cf. *Genesis* iii. 15, "it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise *his* heel." There was also a use, not common, of *it* (Middle E. *hit*) as a possessive, though uninflected; especially in the phrase *it own*. Cf. *The Tempest*, II. 1. 163, "of it own kind," and the Bible of 1611 in *Leviticus* xxv. 5, "of it owne accord." This possessive use of *it* without *own* to strengthen it seems to have been somewhat familiar in Elizabethan E., applied especially to children; cf. *The Winter's Tale*, III. 2. 101, "The innocent milk in *it* most innocent mouth."

Then from the possessive use of *it* uninflected there arose, about the close of the 16th century, the inflected form *its* in which -s is the usual possessive inflection, as in *his*. This new form *its* came into use slowly, the old idiom *his* being generally retained by Elizabethans. There are no instances of *its* in Spenser or in the Bible (1611), and only three in Milton's poetical works (*Paradise Lost*, I. 254, IV. 813, *Nativity Ode*, 106). *Its* does not occur in any extant work of Shakespeare printed prior to his death: hence it seems not improbable that the nine instances in the 1st Folio (five in a single play, *The Winter's Tale*) were due to the editors or printers of the Folio.

**humour**, IV. 1. 43. It was an old belief that all existing things consist of *four elements* or constituent parts, viz. fire, water, earth and air; that in the human body these *elements* appear as four *humours*—fire = choler, water = phlegm, earth = melancholy, air = blood; and that a man's 'temperament' or nature depends upon the way in which these *humours* are 'tempered,' i.e. mixed, in him. So in Elizabethan E. *humour* often has a wider sense than now, e.g. 'prevailing temper, cast of mind.' Cf. the titles of Ben Jonson's comedies, *Every Man in his Humour* and *Every Man out of his Humour*.

**husbandry**, III. 4. 25, 'care of, stewardship.' *Husband* = Icelandic *húsbóndi*, 'master of a house,' literally 'one dwelling in a house' (*hús*).

**knap**. The radical notion is 'to break with a noise.' Thus to 'knap ginger' (III. 1. 9) is 'to break it off by biting'; and 'to

knap on the head' is colloquially 'to give a *crack* on the head'—as the woman did to the eels, *King Lear*, II. 4. 125. Dutch *knappen*, 'to snap, crack'; cf. Germ. *knappen* (same sense). All are imitative words (like 'crack' and 'rap') which suggest the sound of the action.

**livery**, II. 1. 2; in Elizabethan E. = 'any kind of dress, garb'; cf. Milton, *L'Allegro*, 62, "The clouds in thousand liveries dight." Originally *livery* meant whatever was given (i.e. *delivered*) by a lord to his household, whether food, money or garments. From F. *livrer* = Low Lat. *liberare*, 'to abandon.'

**main**, IV. 1. 72. Icelandic *megin*, 'mighty,' common in compounds, e.g. *megin-sjór*, 'mighty sea'; from the same root as Gk. *μέγας*, Lat. *magnus*.

**marry**, corrupted from the name of the 'Virgin Mary'; cf. "by'r lady" = 'by our Lady,' i.e. the Virgin. Such expressions dated from the pre-Reformation times in England. The common meanings of *marry* are 'indeed, to be sure,' and 'why' as an expletive—some contempt being often implied.

**masque**, or **mask**, II. 4. 22, 'an entertainment or procession in which those who took part wore *masks* or vizards.' From Arabic *maskharat*, 'a buffoon; a pleasantry.'

**mercy**, IV. 1. 353, 'power, discretion.' Cf. the O.F. phrase *estre à merci* = 'to be in the power of anyone as to the amount of a fine (Late Lat. *merx*) which he could impose.' To *amerce* is to impose a fine (*merx*) upon. A false derivation from Lat. *misericordia*, 'pity,' has affected the general meaning of *mercy*.

**mere**, III. 2. 257, 'unqualified, absolute'; Lat. *merus*, 'pure, unmixed.' Cf. *Othello*, II. 2. 3, 4, "the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet," i.e. complete destruction.

**methinks**; **methought**. These are really *impersonal* constructions such as were much used in Middle E.; their meaning is, 'it seems, or seemed, to me.' The pronoun is a dative, and the verb is not the ordinary verb 'to think' = A.S. *þencan*, but an obsolete impersonal verb 'to seem' = A.S. *þyncan*. These cognate verbs got confused through their similarity; the distinction between them as regards usage and sense is shown in Milton's *Paradise Regained*, II. 266, "*Him thought* he by the brook of Cherith stood" = 'to him it seemed that' etc. Cf. their German cognates *denken*, 'to think,' used personally, and the impersonal *es dunkt*, 'it seems'; also the double use of Gk. *δοκεῖν*. For the old impersonal constructions cf. Spenser, *Prothalamion* 60, "*Them seem'd* they never saw a sight so fayre."

**moe**, or **mo**, I. 1. 108 = 'more'; both forms (but *moe* is commoner) are used without any distinction in the 1st Folio, and



each is often changed to *more* in the later Folios. Middle E. *mo* from A.S. *mā*, 'more, others,' indicated number; *more*, from A.S. *māra*, 'greater,' indicated magnitude; now *more* serves both purposes. The root of each is that which we get in the verb *may*. In Elizabethan writers *more* is frequent; cf. the *Faerie Queene*, I. 3. 35, "All these, and many evils moe haunt ire."

*moiety*, IV. I. 26, 'a portion,' strictly 'a half'; F. *moitié*, Lat. *medietas*. Closely akin to *medium*.

*morrow*, I. I. 65, 'morning.' These two words and *morn* are cognates, all coming from the Middle E. *morewen*, which was softened from A.S. *morgen*; cf. Germ. *morgen*.

*naughty*, III. 2. 18, v. 91, always used by Shakespeare = 'bad, good for naught.' Cf. *Proverbs* vi. 12, "A naughty person, a wicked man." *Naught* = *ne*, the old negative + *auȝt*.

*nice*, II. I. 14, 'fastidious, too critical.' *Nice* (Lat. *nescius*, 'ignorant') first meant foolish, as in Chaucer; then 'foolishly particular, too scrupulous,' as often in Shakespeare. The word has improved in sense.

*other*, I. I. 54 = 'others'; cf. *Psalms* xlix. 10, "wise men also die...and leave their riches for other," and lxxiii. 8, "They corrupt other, and speak of wicked blasphemy" (Prayer-Book) Originally *other* was declined and made its plural *othre*: when the plural inflexion *e* became obsolete, *othre* became obsolete, and for a time *other* was used for both singular and plural! this proved confusing, and a fresh plural *others* was formed by adding the ordinary plural suffix *-s*.

*outrageous*, II. 8. 13. The radical idea of *outrage* (in which *-age* is a termination) is 'a going beyond bounds'; cf. F. *outré*, 'beyond,' Lat. *ultra*. Hence the notion 'excessive violence,' 'fury,' helped perhaps by confusion with the noun *rage*.

*pageant*, I. I. 11, 'an exhibition, spectacle'; originally = the moveable scaffold on which the old 'mystery-plays' and shows were acted. Lat. *pagina*, 'a page,' also 'a plank of wood,' and later 'a scaffold of planks' fastened together; cf. Lat. *pangere*, 'to fasten' (Skeat).

*patch*, II. 5. 46, 'a fool, simpleton.' The professional jester or fool attached to a court or nobleman's house was called a *patch* from his *patch*-like, 'motley' dress: hence 'Patch' became a kind of nickname; Wolsey had two jesters so named.

*patine*, v. 59; Lat. *patina*, 'a dish.' The 2nd and 3rd Quartos have the form *pattens*.

*peize*, III. 2. 22. Literally 'to weigh, *poise*' (F. *peser*). To "peize the time" is to retard it, make it go slower, either from the metaphor of "weighing each moment deliberately," or from

'weighing down' by putting weights into the scale. I prefer the latter view; cf. *Edward III*, II. 1,

"And *peise* their deeds with *weight* of heavy lead"

(clearly = 'weigh down,' whence the figurative sense 'retard').

**pie**d, I. 3. 76, 'parti-coloured,' like the plumage of a *pie* = 'magpie' (F. *pie*, Lat. *pica*). Compare *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. 2. 904, "daisies *pie*d."

**pill**, 'to strip'; another spelling of *peel*, connected with *pell*, 'a skin' (Lat. *pellis*).

**plea**, III. 2. 277, IV. 1. 196. In Shakespeare *plea* is used of what the *plaintiff* in a suit claims, or says in support of his claim: in modern E. *plea* usually signifies the *defendant's* case. O.F. *plaid* = the proceedings in a law-court, a trial; from Late Lat. *placitum*, a decision.

**prevent**, I. 1. 61, 'anticipate, forestall'; cf. I *Thessalonians* iv. 15, "we which are alive...shall not prevent them which are asleep," i.e. 'rise before.' Lat. *prævenire*, 'to come before.'

**puny**, III. 4. 74, 'petty'; literally 'younger,' F. *puis né*, Lat. *post natus*. Cf. "*Puisne* Judge," a judge of inferior rank, i.e. inferior to those of the Court of Appeal.

**purchase**. First to hunt after (O.F. *purchacer* = F. *pour + chasser*); "then to take in hunting; then to acquire; and then, as the commonest way of acquiring is by giving money in exchange, to buy." The sense 'to acquire, gain' is common in Elizabethan E. See II. 9. 43, and cf. I *Timothy* iii. 13, "they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree" (Revised Version 'gain').

**purse**, I. 3. 163. Through O.F. from Low Lat. *bursa* = Gk. *βύρσα*, 'a skin,' of which purses were made; cf. *bursar*, *disburse* and F. *bourse*. There was a Middle F. form *burs*. Skeat says that the softening from *b* to *p* is very rare, but occurs in *peat*, originally *beat*.

**quaint**, III. 4. 69. Derived through O.F. *coint* from Lat. *cognitus*, 'well-known'; cf. *acquaint* from Lat. *adcognitare*. The original sense (1) was 'knowing, wise'; cf. Hampole's *Psalter*, Ps. cxix. 98, "Abouen myn ennys quaynt thou me made," i.e. "wiser than mine enemies." But (2) through a false notion that it was from Lat. *comptus*, 'trimmed, adorned,' *quaint* lost its old sense 'knowing' and came to signify 'fine, dainty, pretty.' Cf. "my quaint Ariel," *The Tempest*, I. 2. 317; "a fine, quaint, graceful and excellent fashion" (of a dress), *Much Ado About Nothing*, III. 4. 22, 23. Hence *quaintly* = 'gracefully, prettily,' II. 4. 6. Perhaps (3) *quaint* = 'odd, eccentric' (a sense not found in Shakespeare) arose from the notion 'too trim, over-fine.'

**quire**, V. 62, 'to sing in unison with'; used as a verb in

*Coriolanus*, III. 2. 113. An older form of *choir*, Lat. *chorus*; cf. O.F. *quer* and F. *chœur*. "In Quires and places where they sing," Prayer-Book.

*quit*, IV. 1. 379, 'to remit.' To be *quit* of a thing is to be *quiet* from it. Lat. *quietus*, used in Late Lat. = 'clear of a debt' (i.e. at rest from it).

*rehearse*, IV. 1. 360, 'to mention, recite'; now commonly 'to go over a play or piece of music before performing it in public.' From O.F. *rehercer*, 'to harrow over again' = (by metaphor) 'to go over the same ground,' i.e. repeat. Lat. *herpex*, 'a harrow.'

*remorse*, IV. 1. 20, 'pity'; a commoner sense in Shakespeare than 'compunction, regret' (literally 'biting again,' viz. of conscience, Lat. *remordere*, 'to bite again').

*Rhenish*, I. 2. 88, III. 1. 34, 'Rhine wine.' *Rhene* from Lat. *Rhenus* was then the usual form of the river's name. Hexham in his edition (1636) of *Mercator's Atlas*, perhaps the leading geographical work of the age, always writes *Rhene* or 'Rhene-stream.'

*sad*, II. 2. 182, 'grave, serious,' without any notion of sorrow. Cf. *Henry V*, IV. 1. 318, "the sad and solemn priests"; and Milton, *Paradise Lost*, VI. 541, "in his face I see sad resolution." The original sense was 'sated,' A.S. *sæd* being akin to Lat. *satis*, 'enough.'

*scape*, II. 2. 151; originally short for *escape*, it became an independent form and should be printed *scape*, not '*scape*. Literally 'to slip out of one's cape' (Lat. *ex + cappa*), and so 'to steal off'; cf. F. *échapper*.

*shrewd*, III. 2. 238; the past participle of *schrewen*, 'to curse'; hence in Elizabethan E. its common sense 'bad.' Cf. "shrewd news" = 'bad news,' *King John*, V. 5. 14; "a shrewd turn" = 'a bad turn,' *All's Well That Ends Well*, III. 5. 71. The good sense 'clever,' 'sharp' is rare in Shakespeare. From the noun *shrew* (V. 21) = A.S. *scredwa*, "a shrew-mouse, fabled to have a very venomous bite."

*shrive*, I. 2. 123, 'to hear at confession and absolve,' as a priest. Cf. *shrift*, 'confession' (as in 'to give short shrift'), and *Shrove-tide*, 'the time for making confession.' A.S. *scrifan* was borrowed from Lat. *scribere*, 'to write,' later 'to impose a penance on'; one of the words that came into A.S. through the Christian missionaries.

*signior*, modern Ital. *signor*; the equivalent of F. *monsieur* and our *sir* (F. *sire*); cf. also F. *seigneur* and Lat. *senior*.

*smug*, III. 1. 39, 'trim, spruce'; not necessarily contemptuous then as now; cf. *King Lear*, IV. 6. 202, "like a smug bride-

groom." It illustrates the tendency of words to deteriorate in sense. Akin to Germ. *schmuck*, 'ornament.'

*sooth*, I. 1. 1, 'truth'; A.S. *sōð*, 'true.' Cf. *forsooth*, *soothsayer*. Used adverbially (cf. "good sooth," II. 6. 42) it is short for 'in sooth.' Adverbial phrases in constant use naturally get abbreviated.

*Sophy*, II. 1. 25, 'the Shah of Persia.' The word *Sophy* is a corruption of Arabic *safī*, 'elect,' 'chosen'; and *safī* was a title (like the 'Cæsar' of the Roman emperors) borne by each Shah or sovereign of the dynasty founded by Ismael which ruled Persia 1505-1725. The derivation of *Sophy* from *sūfi*, 'wise,' is wrong.

*spoke*, II. 4. 5. Elizabethans often use the form of the past tense as a past participle—cf. *undertook* (II. 4. 7); and conversely with certain verbs, e.g. *begin*, *sing*, *spring*, the form of the past participle as a past tense. Thus Shakespeare and Milton nearly always use *sung* instead of *sang*; cf. *Paradise Lost*, III. 18, "I *sung* of Chaos and eternal Night."

*starved*; in the Folio *sterv'd*; cf. the Middle E. spelling *sterven* from A.S. *steorfan*. Originally *starve* = to die, like the cognate Germ. *sterben*; then to die of hunger or cold, then to suffer either very keenly, e.g. be ravenous (IV. 1. 138).

*stead*, I. 3. 7, 'to help, be of use to'; cf. *Measure for Measure*, I. 4. 17, "can you so *stead* me?" To do a thing in the *stead*, i.e. place, of a man is to help him.

*still*. The radical meaning of the adj. *still* is 'abiding in its place'; hence = 'constantly, ever' as an adverb. Cf. "the still-vexed Bermoothes," i.e. continually disturbed by storms, *The Tempest*, I. 2. 229.

*sultan*, II. 1. 26; Arabic *sultān*, 'victorious,' which was Latinised as *soldanus*; cf. the form "the *Soldan*" used in *Paradise Lost*, I. 764.

*thoroughly*, IV. 1. 171; cf. *Matthew* iii. 12, "he will *thoroughly* purge his floor." *Thorough*, whence *thoroughly*, is a later form of the preposition *through* (whence *thoroughly*). Akin to Germ. *durch*, 'through': *th* = *d*, an illustration of Grimm's law.

*tucket*, V. 121 (*stage-direction*), 'a flourish, set of notes played on the trumpet or cornet as a signal.' Generally found, as here, in *stage-directions*; cf. Ben Jonson, *The Case is Altered*, I. 2, end, "*A tucket sounds. Exeunt severally.*" Ital. *toccata*, 'a prelude, preliminary flourish on a musical instrument,' from *toccare*, 'to touch.'

*turquoise*, III. 1. 108; literally 'the *Turkish* stone'; cf. the poetic form *turkis*, e.g. in Milton's *Comus*, 894, "turkis blue, and emerald green." The Oriental turquoise is chiefly found in

a mountain region in the north-east of Persia; but it reached Europe through Constantinople—hence its name.

vail, I. 1. 28, 'to lower'; cf. I *Henry VI*, v. 3. 25, "France must veil her lofty-plumed crest." F. *avaler*, from Lat. *ad* + *vallem*, 'to the valley'; cf. the opposite word *paramount*, literally 'at the top,' = *per* + *ad montem*, 'up to the mountain.'

virtue, v. 199, 'efficacy'; cf. *Sonnet* 81, "You still shall live—such virtue hath my pen." So *virtuous* and *virtual* = 'full of efficacy'; cf. Milton's *Comus* 621 ("virtuous plant and healing herb"), *Paradise Lost*, xi. 338. Lat. *virtus*, 'worth, manly excellence' (*vir*, 'a man').

wanton, III. 2. 93. The radical sense is 'ill-restrained': *wan* being a negative prefix expressing *want*, deficiency, and the latter part of the word being connected with A.S. *téon*, 'to draw.' For the prefix cf. the old words *wanhope*, 'despair,' *wantrust*, 'distrust.'

wealth, v. 241, 'welfare, prosperity,' like *weal*. Cf. the Prayer-Book, "in health and wealth long to live." Literally 'a state of being *well*,' according to one's *will* or wish; *well* and *will* are allied.

wis, II. 9. 68. Strictly *I wis* should be written *iwis*, being a later form of the A.S. adverb *geuis*, 'certainly'; cf. Germ. *gewiss*, 'certainly.' But *iwis* got confused with *I wist*, 'I knew,' the past tense (cf. *Mark* ix. 6) of the anomalous verb *wit* 'to know.' Hence the transformation of the adverb *iwis* into a pronoun and wrong present tense (the true form of the present of *wit* being *wot*).

wreck; in the 1st Folio always spelt *wrack*, the usual form till late in the 17th century, and in some passages the rhyme requires it. Cf. *Macbeth*, v. 5. 51. From A.S. *wrecan*, 'to drive,' the *wrack* or *wreck* being that which is driven ashore.

#### ADDENDUM

fretten, IV. 1. 77; the old "strong" past participle displaced by the "weak" form *fjctted* (which the Folio reads).

# APPENDIX

## I

### THE SOURCES OF THE PLAY

#### A.

#### *IL PECORONE.*

The following is abridged from Johnson's summary:

Giannetto, a young noble of Florence, whose father has left him no money, comes to Venice and is befriended by his godfather Ansaldo, the richest merchant there. One day Giannetto expresses a desire to make a voyage to Alexandria, so as to see something of the world; Ansaldo furnishes him with a fine ship and much merchandise, and off he starts. Sailing along the Venetian coast he observes a beautiful port and asks the captain whose it is. The captain says that it belongs to a widow who has become very rich by gaining the fortunes of many lovers; for she has made it a law that whoever puts into the harbour (which is called Belmonte) must woo her, and if he fails to fulfil certain difficult conditions, give up to her everything he has brought with him. Many have tried, but the lady (who is extremely beautiful) has drugged and tricked them. So Giannetto puts into port, tries, fails, loses his valuable ship and merchandise, and returns to Venice with the story that he has been shipwrecked; and Ansaldo receives him again into his house. A little time passes and then Giannetto again expresses a wish to travel; and Ansaldo provides him with a yet costlier vessel. He reaches Belmonte, is unsuccessful again over the hard conditions, loses his property as before, and comes back to Venice. However, he is determined to make a third venture, so persuades Ansaldo to provide a third ship. Ansaldo consents, but he has spent so much money already on Giannetto that his fortune has run very low, and he has to borrow 10,000 ducats of a Jew—on the condition that if he fails to repay the loan by the Feast of St John in the next month of June, the Jew may take a pound of flesh from any part of his body. The contract is signed, the ship and merchandise got ready, and Giannetto departs. Before he goes, Ansaldo who has more than a foreboding that he may not be able to repay the money, gets Giannetto to promise that if anything should happen to him (Ansaldo), he will return to Venice to bid him farewell: if Giannetto does this, he can leave the world with satisfaction. And Giannetto promises. At this

third venture he succeeds, through a hint from one of the lady's waiting-maids, wins and marries the lady, lives very happily and forgets all about poor Ansaldo. One day, as he stands at the window of the lady's palace he sees a procession pass and asks the reason. It is St John's Day, they tell him, and instantly he remembers that this is the fatal day for Ansaldo. He is greatly agitated, his wife enquires the cause, and, learning, bids him hurry to Venice with 100,000 ducats to pay the debt, in case Ansaldo has not been able. It is too late, however; Ansaldo has failed to pay; other merchants would discharge the debt willingly for him, but the Jew refuses, and will not take even 100,000 ducats.

Meanwhile the lady is hastening to Venice. She is disguised as a lawyer from the University of Bologna (and we will call her the lawyer now). Arrived at an inn, the lawyer is told of this case about which all Venice is talking. He gives out that he is ready to determine difficult cases, and this one is referred to him, though the Jew declares that he means to have his penalty, whatever the lawyer may say. The lawyer reasons with the Jew, and urges him to take the 100,000 ducats which Giannetto (who does not recognise the lawyer) offers. But the Jew refuses, and the lawyer says there is no help—the pound of flesh must be taken. Just as the Jew is about to cut it, the lawyer interrupts: "Take care what you do: do not cut more or less, and shed no blood: else you must die." The Jew protests, but in vain, and then asks for the 100,000 ducats; but the lawyer says "no:" the Jew has rejected the money, and now he shall have no money at all, not even the loan of 10,000—only the flesh, if he will run the risk. It ends in the Jew tearing up the bond and leaving the court in a rage. Giannetto presses the lawyer to accept the 100,000 ducats, but he will only have a ring that Giannetto is wearing. Giannetto is loath to give it, but eventually does; and so they part.

The lady (as we must now call her again) returns home, and a few days later comes Giannetto, with Ansaldo and some other friends. She asks him, of course, for the ring and pretends to be terribly angry when he confesses that he gave it to the lawyer. "I swear by all that is sacred, and by your dear self, that I gave the ring to the lawyer who gained our cause." "And I can swear" (she replies) "that you gave the ring to a woman; therefore, swear no more." But all is explained soon, and Ansaldo marries the young maid-in-waiting who had given Giannetto the hint by which he was able to fulfil the hard conditions imposed upon the wooers and win the "lady of Belmonte."

It is needless to dwell here on the resemblance of this story to the *Merchant of Venice*; but Shakespeare's treatment of it, more particularly the changes introduced, should be observed.

(1) He drops the first two visits to Belmonte and compresses the interest by making the action start with the lover's third and successful expedition. Giannetto's two failures might be described in the leisurely narrative of a novel, but could not be brought within the compass of a play.

(2) The story of the Caskets, a far more poetical and picturesque device, is substituted for the original conditions of wooing.

(3) Portia is a very much more pleasing creation than the money-loving widow who tricks successive suitors out of their property by drugging them—not but that the lady of the novel improves upon acquaintance and wins our sympathy in the later stages of the story.

(4) In the signing of the bond the play has a decided advantage over the novel as regards probability. "For whereas Ansaldo, knowing himself to be ruined, signs the bond with a clear presentiment of the consequence, and yet asks Giannetto for nothing more than a promise that he will see him before he dies, Antonio when he signs, though short of ready money for the moment, is still in the full flow of his fortune, and laughs at the idea of being called on to pay the forfeit" (Spedding).

(5) Antonio's character and conduct are more appropriate to the action. "The absolute inoffensiveness of Ansaldo, who does not seem to have uttered a harsh word, or entertained an unkind thought against anybody, seemed to make the Jew's proceeding too monstrous to be endurable by an English audience" (Spedding). Whereas Antonio's treatment of Shylock furnishes him with the strongest motives of malice, and thus makes his persecution of the Christian merchant at least intelligible.

(6) Antonio's relation to Bassanio differs somewhat from Ansaldo's to Giannetto. Ansaldo is evidently a much older man; he is Giannetto's godfather and has adopted him. Antonio and Bassanio are compeers, and the one has no claim other than that of friendship on the other.

(7) The novel lacks a second pair of lovers like Gratiano and Nerissa to 'echo' the doings and sayings of the more prominent pair, and emphasise the humour of an incident like that in the court, IV. 1. 280-292, and, still more, the ring-difficulty.



## B.

## SILVAYN'S ORATOR.

This is the passage of Silvayn's *Orator* (1596) which editors quote in illustration of some points in *The Merchant of Venice*<sup>1</sup>.

\* "DECLAMATION. 95.

*Of a Jew, who would for his debt haue a pound of the  
flesh of a Christian.*

*A Iew vnto whom a Christian Marchant ought<sup>2</sup> nine hundred crownes, would haue summoned him for the same in Turckie: the Merchant, because he would not be discredited, promised to pay the said summe within the tearme of three months, and if he paid it not, he was bound to giue him a pound of the flesh of his bodie. The tearme being past some fiftene daies, the Iew refused to take his money, and demaunded the pound of flesh: the ordinurie Iudge of that place appointed him to cut a iust<sup>3</sup> pound of the Christian's flesh, and if he cut either more or lesse, then his owne head should be smitten off: the Iew appealed from this sentence, vnto the chiefe iudge, saying:*

Impossible is it to breake the credite of trafficke amongst men without great detriment vnto the Commonwealth<sup>4</sup>: wherefore no man ought to bind himselfe vnto such couenants which hee cannot or wil not accomplish, for by that means should no man feare to be deceaued, and credit being maintained, every man might be assured of his owne; but since deceit hath taken place, neuer wonder if obligations are made more rigorous & strict then they were wont, seeing that although the bonds are made neuer so strong, yet can no man be very certaine that he shal not be a loser. It seemeth at the first sight, that it is a thing no lesse strange then<sup>5</sup> cruel, to bind a man to pay a pound of the flesh of his bodie, for want of money: Surely, in that it is a thing not vsuall, it appeareth to be somewhat the more admirable, but there are diuers others that are more cruell, which

<sup>1</sup> As quoted by Dr Furness, who gives the title of the book thus: "*The Orator: Handling a hundred seuerall Discourses, in forms of Declamations: Some of the Arguments being drawne from Titus Lilius and other ancient Writers, the rest of the Authors owne inuention: Part of which are of matters happened in our Age. Written in French by Alexander Siluayn, and Englished by L. P. London. Printed by Adam Islip, 1596.*"

<sup>2</sup> owed.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, iv. i. 325.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. iii. 3. 26-31.

<sup>5</sup> than.

because they are in vse seeme nothing terrible at all: as to binde al the bodie vnto a most lothsome prison, or vnto an intollerable slauerie<sup>1</sup>, where not only the whole bodie but also al the sences and spirits are tormented, the which is commonly practised, not only betwixt those which are either in sect or Nation contrary, but also euen amongst those that are all of one sect and nation, yea amongst neighbours and kindred, & euen amongst Christians it hath ben seene, that the son hath imprisoned the father for monie. Likewise in the Roman Commonwealth, so famous for laws and armes, it was lawfull for debt, to imprison, beat, and afflict with torments the free Cittizens: How manie of them (do you thinke) would haue thought themselues happie, if for a small debt they might haue ben excused with the paiment of a pound of their flesh? Who ought then to maruile if a Iew requireth so small a thing of a Christian, to discharge him<sup>2</sup> of a good round summe?

A man may aske<sup>3</sup> why I would not rather take siluer of this man, then his flesh: I might alleage many reasons, for I might say that none but my selfe can tell what the breach of his promise hath cost me, and what I haue thereby paied for want of money vnto my creditors, of that which I haue lost in my credit: for the miserie of those men which esteeme their reputation, is so great, that oftentimes they had rather indure anything secretlie then to haue their discredit blazed<sup>4</sup> abroad, because they would not be both shamed and harmed. Neuerthelesse, I doe freely confesse, that I had rather lose a pound of my flesh, then my credit should be in any sort cracked<sup>5</sup>: I might also say that I haue need of this flesh to cure a friend of mine of a certaine maladie, which is otherwise incurable, or that I would haue it to terrifie thereby the Christians for euer abusing the Iewes anie more hereafter: but I will onelie say, that by his obligation he oweth it me. It is lawfull to kill a souldior if he come vnto the warres but an houre too late, and also to hang a theefe though he steale neuer so little: is it then such a great matter to cause such a one to pay a pound of his flesh, that hath broken his promise manie times, or that putteth another in danger to lose both credit & reputation, yea and it may be life and al for greife? were it not better for him to lose that which I demand, then<sup>6</sup> his soule, already bound by his faith? Neither am I to take that which he oweth me, but he is to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. iv. i. 90-100.

<sup>2</sup> to release him from; or perhaps reflexive=so to release himself from, get quit of. Cf. iii. 2. 268, iv. i. 206, for "discharge."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. iv. i. 40-42.

<sup>5</sup> impaired, damaged.

<sup>4</sup> proclaimed.

<sup>6</sup> than.

<sup>7</sup> oath.

deliuer it me: And especiallie because no man knoweth better then he where the same may be spared to the least hurt of his person, for I might take it in such a place as hee might thereby happen to lose his life: what a matter were it then, if I should cut of his [head], supposing that the same would weigh a iust<sup>1</sup> pound, although it were with the danger of mine owne life? I beleuee I should not; because there were as little reason therein, as there could be in the amends wherevnto I should be bound: or els if I would cut off his nose, his lips, his eares, and pull out his eies, to make of them altogether a pound, should I be suffered? Surely I thinke not, because the obligation dooth not specifie that I ought either to chuse, cut, or take the same, but that he ought to giue me a pound of his flesh. Of euery thing that is sold, he which deliuereth the same is to make waight, and he which receiueh, taketh heed that it be iust<sup>1</sup>: seeing then that neither the obligation, custome, nor law doth bind me to cut, or weigh, much lesse vnto the aboue mentioned satisfaction, I refuse it all, and require that the same which is due should bee deliuered vnto me."

## II

## SHAKESPEARE AND VENICE

Dr Furness<sup>2</sup> cites the following excellent passage in Hunter's *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, i. 299:

"In perusing this play we should keep constantly in mind the ideas which prevailed in England in the time of Shakespeare of the magnificence of Venice. Now, the name calls up ideas only of glory departed—'Her long life hath reached its final day'; but in the age of the poet Venice was gazed on with admiration by the people of every country, and by none with more devotion than those of England. Her merchants were princes,—her palaces were adorned with the works of Titian, and she was, moreover, the seat of all pleasant delights—'The pleasure-place of all festivity, The revel of the world, the masque of Italy.' Lewkenor, Moryson, and other English travellers of the age of Shakespeare, have described Venice, including Coryat<sup>3</sup>, who speaks of the palazzos of the merchants in the vicinity of the city, of the Rialto, and of the Ghetto, one of the islands on which the Jews lived, who were in number five or six thousand.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, and iv. i. 325

<sup>2</sup> From whom the other extracts in this section are taken, except those from the *Quarterly Review*, and Mr Hare's book.

<sup>3</sup> His *Travels* appeared in 1611.

He (i.e. Coryat) describes their dress; the Eastern or Levantine Jews wearing yellow turbans<sup>1</sup>. The impression which the magnificence of Venice made upon this simple-minded but observant traveller may be judged of by the following passage:— 'This incomparable city, this most beautiful Queen, this untainted Virgin, this Paradise, this Tempe, this rich diadem and most flourishing garland of Christendom, of which the inhabitants may as proudly vaunt as I have read the Persians have done of their Ormus, who say that if the world were a ring then should Ormus be the gem thereof,—the same, I say, may the Venetians speak of their city, and much more truly'; and he concludes with saying that 'if four of the richest manors in Somersetshire, where he was born, should have been bestowed upon him if he never saw Venice, he would say that seeing Venice was worth them all.'"

The suggestiveness and accuracy of Shakespeare representation of Italian and more particularly Venetian life in the *Merchant of Venice* have often been remarked.

"Shakespeare, in addition to the general national spirit of the play, describes the Exchange held on the Rialto; the riches of the merchants; their argosies 'From Tripolis, from Mexico, and England; from Lisbon, Barbary, and India': some with 'silks' and 'spices,' 'richly fraught'; he represents 'the trade and profit of the city' as consisting 'of all nations'; he talks amiably of the 'masquing mates,' with their 'torch-bearers' in the streets; of 'the common ferry which trades to Venice,' where Portia is to meet Balthazar, after he has delivered the letter to Doctor Bellario, at Padua, the seat of law; and 'In a gondola were seen together Lorenzo and his amorous Jessica.' All this is written with a perfect knowledge of the place. So magical is the painting, that a lover of Shakespeare, as he enters Venice, looks about him with the air of a man at home, and almost expects to see some merchants talking with a Shylock on the Rialto, till he spies the poverty of the people, and sighs to himself,—'Alas! how changed since the days of the Republic!' Shakespeare might have read of the 'strict Court of Venice' on commercial questions, and of the reasons for such strictness; he might also have found authority in books for—'You have among you many a purchased slave'; but where did he obtain his numerous graphic touches of national manners? where did he learn of an old villager's coming into the city with a 'dish of doves' as a present to his son's master? A present

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bacon's allusion to the Jews' "orange-tawny bonnets"; see p. 176. The Jews in England wore yellow caps as early as Richard I's reign (Knight).

thus given, and in our days too, and of doves, is not uncommon in Italy<sup>1</sup>."

Karl Elze says: "The drama is impregnated, in an inimitable manner, with a thoroughly Italian air, with an aroma of Italy<sup>2</sup>, more readily felt than analysed and defined.... Here and there Shakespeare lets his characters [in the Italian plays] still be English, although this is hardly observable in *The Merchant of Venice*, but he breathes into them Italian souls, Italian passion, southern glow and enjoyment of life."

It is scarcely to be supposed, though the theory has been advanced, that Shakespeare was ever in Italy. Whence then the accuracy of his painting?

"Two main sources of information were open to him: first, the merchant class, whose relations with Venice dated from times as early as the year 1325, and were cemented by the yearly passage of the Venetian merchantmen known as the Flanders galleys; and secondly, the travelled members of the aristocracy, the young gentlemen who returned to England with indelible memories of Italy and all the charm of that pleasant land, who filled the town with talk of Italian cities, and made Venice, in a certain way, the mode, so that Sir John, for example, assures Mistress Ford that, were she his lady, her arched brow would become 'the ship-tire, the tire-valiant, or any tire of Venetian admittance'.... The knowledge which Shakespeare possessed was picked up in the course of daily life by his attentive ear, and stored in his memory; it was quickened and made living by his poet's imagination until it grew sufficient to allow him to picture correctly the pomp and splendour of Venetian State; the sprightliness and tenderness of Venetian women; the gaiety of the young Venetian noble; the deep persistent hatred of the Venetian Jew; the devilish cunning of Venetian Iago [in *Othello*], with enough of local colour in the Rialto, the gondola, [the masquerade], the ferry-boat from Padua, the Doge in Court, to make us feel that though he 'was never out of England, it's as if he saw it all'."

Th. Elze adds a probable source of Shakespeare's knowledge of Venice and its neighbourhood, viz. intercourse with the Englishmen (and there seem to have been not a few) who were

<sup>1</sup> C. A. Brown, the well-known critic of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. especially the commencement of Act v.

<sup>3</sup> fashion. See *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, III. 3. 60, 61.

<sup>4</sup> "Shakespeare and Venice" in the *Quarterly Review*, no. 337, pp. 27, 41. Note too that the name 'Gobbo' was specially connected with Venice; see p. xxxiii.

attracted to Padua<sup>1</sup> by the great fame of the University<sup>2</sup> in medicine and law. The great Elizabethan physicians Linacre, Caius and Harvey (circulation of the blood) all graduated at Padua. Padua was not far from Venice and no student can have failed to visit the renowned city of the sea.

Also, there were Italians living in England, e.g. the learned John Florio; and many Italian books, especially romances and tales, were translated<sup>3</sup> into English and French.

*The Rialto.* Shakespeare does not mean the bridge, popularly called the Rialto, over the Grand Canal, but the Exchange or Chamber of Commerce of the Venetian merchants, which was situate on the island of the Rialto, the original settlement of the city. That is to say, the name *Rialto* (Ital. *rivo alto*, a high bank-shore) was applied, as Staunton remarks, to the island, the Exchange on it, and the bridge, which took its name from the island and ought strictly to be called *Il Ponte di Rialto*, not simply *Rialto*.

Mr Hare, *Cities of Northern Italy*, II. 67, 68, says: "This part of the town was the ancient city of Venice, and derives its name from *Rivo-alto*, as the land on the left of the canal [i.e. the Grand Canal] was called here. After the limits of the town were extended, it continued, like the city of London, to be the centre of commerce and trade.... In the times of the Republic this was the centre of mercantile life in Venice." Then he translates a description (1580) of the meetings of the merchants in and around the Exchange by the Venetian architect and writer of the 16th century, Sansovino: "These porticoes are daily frequented by Florentine, Genoese, and Milanese merchants, by those from Spain and Turkey, and all the other different nations of the world, who assemble here in such vast multitudes, that this piazza is celebrated among the first in the universe."

Coryat's description of the Exchange is as follows: "The Rialto, which is at the farthest side of the bridge as you come from St. Mark's, is a most stately building, being the Exchange of Venice, where the Venetian gentlemen and the merchants

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Taming of the Shrew*, I. I. 2, "fair Padua, nursery of arts."

<sup>2</sup> "A list is given [by Elze] from the Records at Padua, extending from September, 1591, to October, 1594, during which time twenty-five English students were matriculated"—*Furness*. See also Webb's *Travels* (1590), ed. Arber, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ascham's condemnation of the many "fonde [foolish] bookes, of late translated out of *Italian* into English, sold in every shop in London," *Schoolmaster* (1570), Arber's ed. p. 79. Ascham has a lengthy disquisition on the fashion for young Englishmen, especially those of noble birth, to travel in Italy (pp. 71-86).

doe meete twice a day, betwixt eleven and twelve of the clocke in the morning, and betwixt five and sixe of the clocke in the afternoone. This Rialto is of a goodly height, built all with bricke as the palaces are, adorned with many faire walkes or open galleries that I have before mentioned, and hath a pretty quadrangular court [i.e. the piazza mentioned by Sansovino] adjoining to it. But it is inferior to our Exchange in London, though indeede there is a farre greater quantity of building in this than in ours."

*The Jews at Venice.* Editors quote the following: "It is almoste incredible what gaine the Venetians receiue by the vsury of the Jewes, both pryuately and in common. For in euerye citee the Jewes kepe open shops of vsurie, taking gaiges [pledges] of ordinarie for .xv. in the hundred by the yere: and if at the yeres ende, the gaige be not redemed, it is forfeite, or at the least dooen away to a great disaduantage: by reason whereof the Jewes are out of measure wealthie in those parties."—Thomas's *Historye of Italye*, 1561, fol. 76 b.

Webster in *The White Devil* (scene Italy) makes (III. 1) a character speak of "what is ordinary and Rialto talk" (i.e. common gossip).

### III

#### USURY

The following extract is from the article on Usury in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

"It was only natural, considering the evils produced by usury in ancient Greece and Rome, that philosophers should have tried to give an *à priori* explanation of these abuses. The opinion of Aristotle on the barrenness of money became proverbial, and was quoted with approval throughout the Middle Ages. This condemnation by the moralists was enforced by the fathers of the Church on the conversion of the Empire to Christianity. They held usury up to detestation, and practically made no distinction between interest on equitable moderate terms and what we now call usurious exactions. The consequence of the condemnation of usury by the Church was to throw all the dealing in money in the early Middle Ages into the hands of the Jews....It was probably mainly on account of this money-lending that the Jews were so heartily detested and liable to such gross ill-treatment by the people." Gradually Christians began to take interest, and "it may be said generally that an attempt was made to distinguish between usury, in the modern sense of unjust exaction, and interest on capital."

For the opinion of Aristotle referred to cf. a passage of the *Politics* (I. 10), which Dr Jowett renders thus:

"The most hated sort [i.e. of money-making], and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural use of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest. And this term usury (*τόκος*<sup>1</sup>), which means the birth of money from money, is applied to the breeding of money because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of all modes of making money this is the most unnatural."

On the same passage of Aristotle there is the following note in Newman's commentary.

"In usury, according to Aristotle here, the profit comes from money taken by itself, not subjected to any process of exchange, nor converted into corn or any other commodity—the use for which it is intended. It was introduced to serve as a medium of exchange, not to grow, but usury makes it grow. It makes money come out of money, and hence the Greek word for interest (*τόκος*), for as children are like their parents, so is interest money no less than the principal which begets it. Things, however, should be used for the purpose for which they exist; hence this mode of acquisition is in an especial degree unnatural."

This traditional objection to usury is mentioned amongst others in Bacon's *Essay* on the subject. "Many," he says, "have made witty invectives against usury. They say that it is pity the devil should have God's part, which is the tithe; that the usurer is the greatest Sabbath-breaker, because his plough goeth every Sunday; that the usurer is the drone that Virgil speaketh of:

*Ignavum, fucos, pecus a præsepibus arcent*<sup>2</sup>;

that the usurer breaketh the first law that was made for mankind after the fall, which was, *in sudore vultûs tui comedes panem tuum*<sup>3</sup>; not, *in sudore vultûs alieni*<sup>4</sup>; that usurers should have orange-tawny bonnets<sup>5</sup>, because they do Judaize<sup>6</sup>; that it is against nature for money to beget money, and the like."

<sup>1</sup> *τόκος*, literally 'a bringing forth,' birth; hence offspring; hence produce of money, i.e. interest. From *τίκτεω*, to bring forth, bear.

<sup>2</sup> "They drive the drones, a lazy race, away from the hives"—*Georgic* IV. 168.

<sup>3</sup> "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"—*Genesis* iii. 19. The Latin quotation is from the Vulgate.

<sup>4</sup> "In the sweat of another man's brow."

<sup>5</sup> i.e. dark-yellow caps, as a "badge" (*Merchant of Venice*, I. 3. 99; see note there).

<sup>6</sup> i.e. act like Jews. Note that the Jews were excluded from other



In his edition of the *Essays* Mr West says: "An Act of Henry VIII's reign (1545) fixed the maximum rate of lawful interest at 10 per cent.<sup>1</sup> By an Act of Edward VI's (1552) usury was absolutely prohibited as a vice most odious and detestable and contrary to the word of God. Under Elizabeth the Act of Henry VIII was revived, though usury was at the same time declared to be a sinful and detestable thing."

The Elizabethan feeling therefore with regard to usury is a factor of which we must take account in considering the impression which the character of Shylock must have made upon Shakespeare's contemporaries. Curiously enough, there is extant a satirical epitaph on a Stratford usurer, which an old tradition attributes to Shakespeare himself. See *Shakespeare's England* (1916), I. 38.

## IV

## SOME POINTS IN THE TRIAL-SCENE

(1) The signal feature of this scene, one of the most enthralling in all dramatic literature—a scene which when acted holds the audience breathless—is the encounter of the two great characters of the play. It is a duel to the very death between Shylock's devilish cunning and lust of revenge and Portia's splendid intellect and capacity. What increases immensely the effectiveness of the scene is the fact that at first Shylock carries all before him: the friends of Antonio, the Duke himself, are powerless, and we feel the inevitableness of the usurer's inexorable persecution. And then just when his triumph seems assured, there comes the swift intervention which dashes him to the dust. The force of contrast could not go further.

(2) Shylock's fate is terrible, but is it undeserved? Some people say 'yes.' They take the view of the young lady mentioned by Heine, who, at a performance of the play, cried out as Shylock left the court, "The poor man is wronged." He is (they argue) first tricked out of his rights and then punished shamefully on the strength of an obsolete statute. The answer to this argument appears to me clear and conclusive: that Shylock is simply fought with his own weapons, his cunning met and matched by cunning: he sought to make the law the instrument of personal malice, and the instrument recoils on himself. Compare the following criticisms of two German writers<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. what Bacon calls "the tithe" (West).

<sup>2</sup> Both quoted (and translated) by Furness in his appendix on the legal aspects of *The Merchant of Venice*.

(a) "What was the Jew after? The life of Antonio. There is not the least doubt of that. For the pound of flesh in itself he cared not a jot. Well, then, why did he not have that stated clearly in his bond? He dared not; and hence he used the ambiguous phrase, 'a pound of flesh.' And to his own words he is now kept. Is that unjust?"

"The discomfiture of the Jew is not the lamentable downfall of a hero; it is the victory of cunning by greater cunning; the rogue is caught in his own snare. No tears need fall....The clever man was not clever enough, and a cleverer overcame him." And as to the punishment inflicted on Shylock: "Here comes forth the violated majesty of abstract law, punishing, crushing him who dared presume to make law aid wrong. The violation of private rights yields place to the deeply outraged State of Venice that now demands atonement for itself. And so the Jew, because he stood upon his law, gets more law than he desired, a different law from that for which he hoped."

(b) "When Shylock says that he 'can give no reason, nor he will not, more than a lodged hate and a certain loathing that he bears Antonio,' he utters the most shameless profanation which the sanctity of justice can experience, far more disgraceful than any violation of the law; it is an abuse of law by means of law, an abuse which paralyzes law; it is a degradation of law, and a degradation of a court of justice into a tool of the lowest aims."

(3) One point in the terms to which Shylock has to assent is especially repulsive to modern feeling, viz. his enforced conversion to Christianity. Some critics speak as if in this respect Shakespeare merely stooped to gratify the prejudices of his generation. One writes, "in including this among the articles of Shylock's pardon, Shakspere has shown himself scarcely at all in advance of his age." But the objection appears to me to involve the fallacy of identifying the dramatist with the words and actions of his characters. Shakespeare describes what under the circumstances would, almost certainly, have occurred. Shylock's conversion<sup>1</sup> is merely a detail of the picture, true to all probability, and as such the artist introduced it. Surely, Shakespeare's own feelings, so far as they are indicated, lie with the persecuted race (III. i. 50-63).

(4) Johnson considered that Portia's intervention in the case is not accounted for very naturally. "The Doctor and the Court are here somewhat unskillfully brought together. That

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Jew of Malta*, I. 2, where the Governor exacts contributions of the Jews, and the decree is read out, "He that denies to pay shall straight become a Christian" (73, 74).

the Duke would, on such an occasion, consult a doctor [of law] of great reputation, is not unlikely; but how should this be foreknown by Portia?"

But it need not have been known. Padua was not far from Belmont and Venice. As Bellario the eminent Professor of Law at Padua was Portia's cousin, she would naturally turn to him for advice on any legal point; probably he had often been at Belmont in her father's time. And that the Duke should seek the assistance of an eminent jurisconsult of the neighbouring university on so difficult a point as the validity of the contract in the bond was also natural enough. Th. Elze<sup>1</sup> indeed shows that the Professor of Civil Law at Padua in Shakespeare's time, Ottonello Discalzio, was a lawyer of extreme eminence. "The Government of the Republic [of Venice] continually consulted him, and heaped him with honours, commissions, and embassies. For the extraordinary services which he thus rendered to the State he received the conspicuous distinction of the Order of San Marco." The fact therefore that Portia and the Duke *independently* turned to the University of Padua for aid was not at all strange. The sole "coincidence" was that the eminent Professor of Civil Law happened to be related to Portia.

(5) Did Portia see Bellario? Some critics argue that she must have gone to Padua. This seems to me most improbable. For if she meant to go thither, why send Balthazar to Padua for the "notes and garments" (III. 4. 51) which he was to bring to the "tranect" where she would meet him? Clearly, she did not intend to go, nor does it seem likely that she changed her mind.

What happened, I take it, was this. She never went to Padua at all: she sent Bellario a "letter" explaining the case, possibly suggesting a solution of the difficulty and asking whether the solution would hold good in law, and saying that she intended to appear in Court as an advocate: Bellario was to give a letter containing his answer on the point of law and any suggestions that might occur to him, and his lawyer's robes, to Balthazar, who would bring them to Portia at the "tranect": thus equipped she would hasten to Venice and, if necessary, plead for Antonio in Court. While Balthazar was at Padua, Bellario received the Duke's communication about the case (IV. 1. 150); he thought (perhaps from previous knowledge of her) that Portia could take his place quite well; so he fell in with her scheme, sent all she required, explained by letter that she was to personate him and appear as an arbitrator or adviser to the Court instead of as an advocate, and also furnished her with the letter of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Furness.

commendation (iv. i. 143, 144) to present to the Duke—the statements about his “sickness,” and the “young doctor of Rome” who happened to be with him etc., being polite fictions.

(6) What is the difficulty on which the Duke consults Bellario?

The facts with regard to the bond, e.g. that Antonio signed it knowing the terms, are undisputed and the terms clear. The sole point which the Court has to “determine” (106) is the validity of the contract. If a contract contains a condition which infringes the law the contract is invalid. The bond contains a condition which involves the life of Antonio: does that condition offend against the law of Venice and therefore invalidate the bond? That is the point before the Court. It seems to have been a difficult one because the great jurist had to “turn o’er many books” before he could decide. It may have been made more difficult by the fact that the parties to the contract were a citizen and an alien. It is “determined” by the “young doctor” of laws in iv. i. 245–7 (and possibly in 175–7). No doubt, her decision is due to Bellario; still more, the researches into ancient Venetian law (iv. i. 345–60), and the knowledge of the consequences which will befall Shylock if he breaks the conditions mentioned in iv. i. 307, 308 and 324–9. All this represents Bellario’s “opinion” (iv. i. 156). But the two ideas on which the solution hangs (iv. i. 304 and 323, 324) may have been Portia’s.

(7) Shakespeare’s partiality for legal terms and accuracy in using them indicate a considerable knowledge of law, which gave rise to the conjecture that as a youth he may have been in an attorney’s office. But his use of technical terms in general is very correct, and *King Lear* shows that his medical knowledge was great; yet the medical profession have not, I believe, claimed him as a doctor. This Trial-scene is always quoted as an illustration of his legal lore.

Shakespeare’s father, a trader, was constantly engaged in law-suits—“incurably litigious”—so that as a boy the poet must have picked up a good deal of legal knowledge. “He certainly has a remarkable knowledge of the processes and technicalities of the law: he was not the eldest son of his father for nothing” (Raleigh).

It is said that Elizabethan criminal law was extremely severe, and it seems a reasonable view that in Portia’s pleading for mercy we catch Shakespeare’s own voice protesting against needless severity. See *Shakespeare’s England*, i. 44, 45, 402. For his contemporaries he was always “the gentle Shakespeare.”

# HINTS ON METRE

## I. REGULAR TYPE OF BLANK VERSE

Blank verse<sup>1</sup> consists of unrhymed lines, each of which, if constructed according to the regular type, contains five feet, each foot being composed of two syllables and having a strong stress or accent on the second syllable, so that each line has five stresses, falling respectively on the even syllables, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Here is an example from *The Merchant of Venice* (v. 1. 90):

"How fár | that lít|tle cán|dle thróws | his beáms!"

The rhythm of a line like this is a "rising" rhythm.

Blank verse prior to Marlowe, the great Elizabethan dramatist whose work influenced Shakespeare, was modelled strictly on this type. Further, this early blank verse was what is termed "end-stopt": that is to say, there was almost always *some* pause, however slight, in the sense, and consequently in the rhythm, at the close of each line; while the couplet was normally the limit of the sense. As an example of this "end-stopt," strictly regular verse, take the following extract from the first play written in blank verse, viz. the tragedy called *Gorboduc* (1561):

"Why should I live and linger forth my time,  
In longer life to double my distress?  
O me most woeful wight! whom no mishap  
Long ere this day could have bereaved hence:  
Mought not these hands by fortune or by fate  
Have pierced this breast, and life with iron reft?"

If the whole of *The Merchant of Venice* were written in verse of this kind the effect, obviously, would be intolerably monotonous. Blank verse before Marlowe *was* intolerably monotonous, and in an especial degree unsuited to the drama, which with its varying situations and moods needs a varied medium of expression more than any other kind of poetry. Marlowe's great service to metre, carried further by Shakespeare, was to introduce variations into the existing type of the blank deca-

<sup>1</sup> The metre is sometimes called "iambic pentameter verse," but this and other terms of Greek prosody, with its symbols, should be avoided, since classical metres, Greek and Latin, are based on a different principle from English prosody. The basis of classical metre is the "quantity" of syllables, and this is represented by the symbols – (long syllable) and ~ (short). The basis of English metre is stress or accent (i.e. the stress laid by the voice on a syllable in pronouncing it); and stress should be represented by the symbols ' (strong stress) and ` (weak).

syllabic measure. In fact, analysis of the blank verse of any writer really resolves itself into a study of his modifications of the "end-stopt" regular type.

## II. SHAKESPEARE'S VARIATIONS OF THE REGULAR TYPE

The chief variations found in Shakespeare (some of them often combined in the same line) are these:

1. *Weak stresses*. As we read a passage of blank verse our ear tells us that the stresses or accents are not always of the same weight in all the five feet of each line. Thus in the line

"For súf|f'rance is | the bádge | of ál | our tríbe" (I. 3. 99)

one feels at once that the stress in the 2nd foot is not equal to that which comes in the other feet. A light stress like this is commonly called a "weak stress." Two weak stresses may occur in the same line, but rarely come together. The foot in which a weak stress is least frequent is the first. It is perhaps with prepositions that a weak stress, in any foot, occurs most often. Here are lines with weak stresses:

"In Bél|mont is | a lá|dy rích|ly léft;  
And shé | is fáir, | and, fáir|er thàn | that wórd,  
Of wón|drous vír|tues: sóme|times fròm | her éyes  
I díd | receíve | fáir speé|ch|less mé|s|sagès" (I. 1. 161-4).

It may not be amiss to remind the young student that in reading a passage of Shakespeare aloud he should be careful to give the weak stresses as weak, i.e. not lay the same emphasis indiscriminately on all the stressed syllables.

2. *Inverted stresses*<sup>1</sup>. The strong stress may fall on the first of the two syllables that form a foot. The following extracts contain examples:

"Plúcking the grá|ss, | to knó|w | whér sfts | the wínd;  
Peéring | in máps | for pó|rts, and pí|ers, | and ró|ads"  
(I. 1. 18, 19).

"Táke then | thy bó|nd, | táke thou | thy pó|und | of flésh;  
Bút, in | the cú|ting ít, | íf thou | dost shéd  
One dróp | of Chrís|tian bloód, | thy lá|nds | and goóds  
Áre, by | the láws | of Vén|ice, cón|fiscá|te" (IV. 1. 306-309).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mr Robert Bridges's work, *Milton's Prosody*, pp. 19-21, where Milton's use of inversions is fully analysed and illustrated in a way that helps the study of Shakespeare's inversions.

Inversion of the stress is most frequent after a pause: hence the foot in which it occurs most often is the first (i.e. after the pause at the end of the preceding line). Two inversions in one line are seldom consecutive. This shifting of the stress generally *emphasises* a word. It also varies the regular "rising rhythm" of the normal blank verse by a "falling rhythm."

3. *"Extra syllables."* Instead of ten syllables a line may contain eleven or even twelve. An extra syllable, unstressed, may occur at any point in the line, and usually comes before a pause: hence it is commonest in the last foot (the end of a line being the commonest place for a pause), and frequent about the middle of a line (where there is often a break in the sense or rhythm). Compare

"As mÚch | as Í | desérve! | Why, thát's | the lá(dy);

I dó | in bírth | desérve | her, and | in fór(tunes),

In grá|ces and | in quá|litiès | of breéd(ing)" (II. 7. 31-3).

"That év|er blót|ted pá(per). | Géntle | lády" (III. 2. 247).

"That díd | renéw | old Æ(son). | In súch | a níght" (V. 1. 12).

An extra syllable, unstressed<sup>1</sup>, at the end of a line, as in the first three of these examples, is variously called a "double ending" and a "feminine ending." The use of the "double ending" becomes increasingly frequent as Shakespeare's blank verse grows more complex. "Double endings" increase<sup>2</sup> from 4 per cent. in *Love's Labour's Lost* to 33 in *The Tempest*, middle plays such as *Henry V* having a percentage of about 18. The percentage of "double endings" is therefore one of the chief of the metrical tests which help us to fix the date of a play. In fact the use of "double endings" is the commonest of Shakespeare's variations of the normal blank verse. The extra syllable at the end of a line not only gives variety by breaking the regular movement of the ten-syllabled lines, as well as a richness and softness of sound, but also, where there is no pause after it, carries on the sense and rhythm to the next line.

<sup>1</sup> An extra syllable that bears or would naturally bear a stress is rare in Shakespeare. The use of such syllables at the end of a line is a feature of Fletcher's verse, and the frequent occurrence of them in *Henry VIII* is one of the metrical arguments that he wrote a good deal of that play. Milton has one or two instances in *Comus*; cf. 633, "Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this (soil)."  
(Cf. IV. 1. 377, where, however, *sake* is absorbed into the strong emphasis on the preceding word.)

<sup>2</sup> The metrical statistics in these "Hints" are taken from various sources.

Sometimes two extra syllables occur at the end—less commonly, in the middle—of a line. Compare

"Is nó|t | so és|timable, próf|itá|ble nei(ther)" (I. 3. 155).

"Which pries | not tò | th' intér(ior), | but, líke | the márt(let)"  
(II. 9. 28).

"O lóve, | be mód('rate): | alláy | thy éc|stasý" (III. 2. 111).

"With án|y térm|s | of zeál, | wánted | the mód(esty)" (V. 1. 205).

This licence is specially frequent with proper names; compare

"My lórd | Bassán|io, sínce | you've fóund | Antón(io)"  
(I. 1. 69).

"How dóth | that rói|al mér|chant, goód | Antón(io)?"  
(III. 2. 234).

"Then ál|l | a-fire | with mé: | the kíng's | son Fér(dinand)"  
(*The Tempest*, I. 2. 212).

The number of lines with two extra syllables increases much in the later plays of Shakespeare. Generally one of the extra syllables admits of some degree of slurring.

4. *Unstopt (or Run-on) verse.* The blank verse of Shakespeare's early plays shows clearly the influence of the rhymed couplet which he had used so much in his very earliest work. In his early blank verse the rhyme indeed is gone, but the couplet form remains, with its frequent pause of sense, and consequently of rhythm, at the end of the first line, and its still more frequent stop at the end of the second. Lines of this type mark only the first step in the evolution of blank verse: freedom in the expression of sense and varied rhythm are still absent; and freedom and variety come only when the sense "runs on" from one line to another.

If at the end of a line there is *any* pause—anything, that is, in the sense or rhythm which involves an actual pause of the voice, however slight—the line is termed "end-stopt." If there is no pause at the end of the line—nothing to prevent the sound overflowing<sup>1</sup> into the next line—it is termed "unstopt" or

<sup>1</sup> The overflow is helped by the use of "light" and "weak" endings to a line. "Light endings" are monosyllables on which "the voice can to a small extent dwell": such as the parts of the auxiliary verbs, *be, have, will, shall, can, do*; pronouns like *I, we, thou, you, he, she, they, who, which*, etc.; and conjunctions such as *when, where, while*. "Weak endings" are those monosyllables over which the voice passes with practically no stress at all—e.g. the prepositions *at, by, for, from, in, of, on, to, with*; also *and, but, if, nor, or, than, that*: all words which go very closely with what follows



"run-on." There is a progressive increase of "unstopt" verse in the plays. The proportion of "unstopt" to "end-stopt" lines is in *Love's Labour's Lost* only 1 in 18 (approximately); in *The Winter's Tale* it is about 1 in 2. The amount, therefore, of "unstopt" verse in a play is another of the metrical tests by which the period of its composition may, to some extent, be inferred. Necessarily, it is not a fixed test, since sensibility to sound depends on the individual ear, and even punctuation is an uncertain quantity. It must always be remembered that "in considering verse as such it is *sound* alone that counts." Roughly, we may say that the sound and the sense go together; and, as a rule, even a comma involves some pause of sound.

5. *A syllable slurred.* "Provided there be only one accented syllable, there may be more than two syllables in any foot. 'It is he' is as much a foot as 'tis he'; 'we will serve' as 'we'll serve'; 'it is over' as 'tis o'er'."

"Naturally it is among pronouns and the auxiliary verbs [*and prepositions*] that we must look for unemphatic syllables in the Shakespearian verse. Sometimes the unemphatic nature of the syllable is indicated by a contraction in the spelling. Often, however, syllables may be dropped or slurred in sound, although they are expressed to the sight" (Abbott).

This principle that two unstressed syllables may go in the same foot with one stressed syllable is very important because feet so composed have the rapid, trisyllable effect which tends much to vary the normal line. This trisyllabic rhythm is a recognised element of English verse, especially in the foot which classical prosody calls an anapæst (˘˘˘). It is specially characteristic of the later plays. Compare *The Tempest*:

"Bút that | the séa, | móunting | to the<sup>1</sup> wél|kin's cheék"

(1. 2. 4).

"And hére | was léft | by the saíl|ors. Thoú, | my sláve"

(1. 2. 270).

and therefore link the end of one line with the beginning of the next. The use of these endings belongs to the later plays. "Light endings" are first numerous (21) in *Macbeth* (1606), and "weak endings" (28) in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1608). Some of the early plays have neither "light endings" nor "weak." Some have a very few "light endings." Of "weak endings" no play has more than *two* up till *Antony and Cleopatra*. The proportion of these endings—"light" and "weak"—is therefore another of the metrical tests applied to the later plays (Ingram).

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes in such cases the Folio prints *th'*, showing that the word was meant to be slurred (Abbott).

"Hím that | you térm'd, sir, | 'The goód | old lórd, | Gonzá(lo)'"  
(v. 15).

An illustration in *The Merchant of Venice* is, I think, the line:  
"But whó | comes hére? | Lorénzo | and his ín|fidél?"  
(III. 2. 213).

6. *Omissions*. After a pause or interruption there is sometimes an omission (*a*) of a stressed or an unstressed syllable (oftenest in the first foot), or even (*b*) of a whole foot.

"It is obvious" (says Abbott) "that a syllable or foot may be supplied by a gesture, as beckoning, a movement of the head to listen, or of the hand to demand attention": or the blank may be accounted for by an interruption, such as the entrance of another character, or by a marked pause or break in the sense. Compare

(a) "For feár | I súr|feit! [*Bassanio opens*] | Whát find | I hére?"  
(III. 2. 114).

"And né'er | a trúe | one. [*Break*] | In súch | a níght"  
(v. 1. 20).

"Flátter|ers! [*Turns to Brutus*] | Now, Brú|tus, thánk | your-  
sél|f" (*Julius Caesar*, v. 1. 45).

"And fálls | on th' óth|er. [*Enter Lady M.*] | How nów! |  
whát néws?" (*Macbeth*, I. 7. 28).

"As hé | would dráw | it. [*Hamlet 'peruses'*] | Long stáy'd |  
he só" (*Hamlet*, II. 1. 91).

"Má|ny yeárs | of háp|py dáys | befál" (*Richard II*, I. 1. 20).

(b) "He's tá'en. | [*Shout*] | And, hárk! | they shoút | for jóy"  
(*Julius Caesar*, v. 3. 32).

"Must gíve | us paúse. | [*Meditation*] | Thére's the | respéct"  
(*Hamlet*, III. 1. 68).

"Point to | rich énds. | [*Stops and points*] | Thís my | mean  
tásk" (*The Tempest*, III. 1. 4).

7. *Lines of irregular length*. Shakespeare uses lines of three feet often; less frequently, lines of two feet (I. 1. 5), especially to break the course of some passionate speech; half-lines occasionally; brief questions, answers and exclamations, which metrically need not count; and rarely lines with six strong stresses, i.e. Alexandrines<sup>1</sup> (the sonorous type of verse which ends each stanza in *The Faerie Queene*). I think that the in-

<sup>1</sup> So called either from Alexandre Paris, an old French poet, or from the *Roman d'Alexandre*, a 12th century poem about Alexander the Great, written in rhymed lines of six feet, in couplets. It is the metre of French tragedy (e.g. of the tragedies of Racine and Corneille).

scriptions on the caskets (II. 7) should be regarded as Alexandrines; also III. 2. 154, where the long sonorous line gives great emphasis, appropriate to the context.

As a rule, the use of a short line corresponds with something in the sense, e.g. a break (as at the end of a speech), agitation, conversational effect of question and answer, strong emphasis. Thus in *Hamlet* agitation is obviously expressed by the metrical breaks in Horatio's apostrophe of the Ghost (I. 1. 129, 132, 135), and passion of varying moods by the pauses in Hamlet's soliloquy (II. 2. 575-616). At the close of a speech a short line gives perhaps greater emphasis, and certainly variety.

There are not a few lines which look somewhat like Alexandrines ("apparent Alexandrines," as Abbott calls them) but which on examination are found not to have six unmistakable stresses. Thus in many seemingly long lines one syllable or more can be slurred or elided or treated as extra-metrical. We have already noted several illustrations.

Again, some seemingly six-foot lines (I. 1. 50) are really "trimeter couplets": that is, "couplets of two verses of three accents each...often thus printed as two separate short verses in the Folio....Shakespeare seems to have used this metre mostly for rapid dialogue and retort, and in comic and the lighter kind of serious poetry" (Abbott). Generally some notion of division is suggested, e.g. in II. 6. 2 (divided between two speakers, as is often the case with the trimeter couplet).

These, then, are the chief modes by which Shakespeare diversifies the structure of regular blank verse. Their general result has been well summed up thus: that they make the effect of Shakespeare's maturer blank verse rather rhythmical than rigidly metrical, i.e. more a matter of stresses distributed with endless variety than of syllables calculated and accented according to a normal standard; and there is a progressive development in the trisyllabic direction. Every student should grasp these variations thoroughly, particularly the first five, and observe the illustrations of them that occur in any play (especially the later plays) that he may be studying. And he must, of course, remember that scansion depends much on the way in which a writer abbreviates or lengthens sounds, as the metre requires.

Abbreviation comprises all the cases in which a syllable does not count metrically—whether it be altogether elided<sup>1</sup> to the ear, though not to the eye, or slurred. Many abbreviations belong to everyday speech, others to poetical usage.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the common elision of *the* before a vowel; or a line like

"You give | your wife | too unkind | a cause | of grief" (V. 1. 175).

Of lengthening of sounds the most important example is the scansion of a monosyllable as two syllables, e.g. *you*, emphatic (II. 6. 24), *yours* emphatic (III. 2. 18, 20).

For full details the student must refer to the standard authority, viz. Dr Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar*, pp. 344-87.

### III. SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF RHYME

In his early plays Shakespeare uses the rhymed couplet<sup>1</sup> very largely; but gradually the amount of rhyme declines, so that the proportion of rhymed couplets in a piece is one of the surest indications of the period to which it belongs.

Is there much rhyme? the play is early.

Is there little rhyme? the play is late.

"In *Love's Labour's Lost* there are about two rhymed lines to every one of blank verse. In *The Comedy of Errors* there are 380 rhymed lines to 1150 unrhymed. In *The Tempest* two rhymed lines occur; in *The Winter's Tale* not one" (Dowden).

In applying the rhyme test we must exclude the cases where there is a special reason for the use of rhyme—as in the Witch-scenes of *Macbeth*. Thus the rhyme of the Masque in Act IV. of *The Tempest* has no bearing whatsoever on the date of the play, because Masques were usually written in rhymed measures. Similarly all songs such as we get in *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale* must, of course, be excluded. Again, the play-scene in *Hamlet* (III. 2) is designedly written in the manner of the old-fashioned rhymed tragedy.

Let us consider for a moment the reasons which led Shakespeare to adopt blank verse and gradually abandon rhyme.

As a medium of dramatic expression blank verse, of the varied Shakespearian type, has these points of superiority over rhyme:

1. *Naturalness*. Rhyme is artificial. It reminds us, therefore,—perhaps I should say, never lets us forget—that the play is a play, fiction and not reality, because in real life people do not converse in rhyme. Especially in moments of great emotion does rhyme destroy the illusion of reality: we cannot conceive of Lear raving at Goneril in rhymed couplets. Blank verse on the other hand has something of the naturalness of conversation, and naturalness is a very great help towards making fiction appear like truth.

2. *Freedom*. The necessity of rhyming imposes restraint upon a writer such as blank verse obviously does not involve,

<sup>1</sup> i.e. of five feet in each line; cf. I. i. 184, 185.

and often forces him to invert the order of words or even to use a less suitable word. The rhythm too of the rhymed couplets tends strongly to confine the sense within the limits of the couplet, whereas in the blank verse of a skilful writer the sense "runs on" easily from line to line. In fact, in the rhymed couplet the verse is apt to dominate the sense; while in blank verse the sense finds unfettered expression. And so blank verse has not only something of the naturalness but also something of the freedom of conversation.

3. *Variety*. In a paragraph of rhymed couplets the pauses in the sense and therefore in the rhythm are monotonous. We constantly have a pause at the end of the first line and almost always a pause at the end of the second. With the uniformity of a passage composed in this form contrast the varied rhythms of such blank verse as that of *The Tempest*, where the pauses are distributed with ever-changing diversity of cadence.

Again, the rhyme of a long narrative poem when read, or of a short lyric when recited, has a pleasing effect; but in a long spell of spoken verse I think that the sound of rhyme, though at first agreeable to it, gradually tires the ear.

These considerations on the comparative merits of rhymed and unrhymed verse on the stage may be tested, in some measure, by careful reference to the Masque in *The Tempest* (IV. 1).

What rhyme we do get in Shakespeare's later plays is mainly at the end of a scene, when it serves to indicate the conclusion, and (less commonly) at the close of a long speech, when it forms a kind of climax. As to the former use Dr Abbott says: "Rhyme was often used as an effective termination at the end of the scene. When the scenery<sup>1</sup> was not changed, or the arrangements were so defective that the change was not easily perceptible, it was, perhaps, additionally desirable to mark that a scene was finished."

And just as rhyme often marks the close of a scene so it sometimes marks leave-taking (II. 6. 58, 59; II. 7. 76, 77) or the close of a chapter in a man's career, and suggests farewell. A striking example of this use of rhyme occurs in *As You Like It*, II. 3. 67-76, where old Adam and Orlando, about to set forth on their expedition, severally bid farewell to their former life. Similarly in *Richard II*, II. 2. 142-9, the rhyme expresses

<sup>1</sup> There was no movable scenery; the only outward indication of the locality intended was some stage 'property'—e.g. "a bed to signify a bed-chamber; a table with pens upon it to signify a counting-house; or a board bearing in large letters the name of the place"—*Dowden*.

the feeling of the King's favourites that their period of prosperity is over and they are parting for ever; while in v. 5. 110-19, it emphasises the tragedy of the close of Richard's life. Again, in *King Lear* (a comparatively late play, 1605-1606) the banished Kent is made to use rhyme in his leave-taking (i. i. 183-90).

One other noticeable purpose of rhyme is found in plays as late as *Othello* (about 1604) and *Lear*, viz. to express moralising reflections on life and give them a sententious, epigrammatic effect. Dowden instances *Othello*, i. 3. 202-19, and ii. i. 149-61. This use of rhyme is natural because proverbial wisdom so often takes a rhymed form. Maxims stick better in the memory when they are rhymed.

#### IV. SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF PROSE

The chief use to which Shakespeare puts prose is as a conversational medium of expression. He introduces it where he wishes "to lower the dramatic pitch," and does not desire a poetical effect: where, in fact, he wants to convey the impression of people talking together. This use is illustrated so fully in *The Merchant of Venice* that it is needless to particularise<sup>1</sup>. Attention, however, may be drawn to the interesting transitions from prose to verse and verse to prose in the same scene. These alternations are very suggestive as indications of change of mood or circumstances, and the reason in each case should be carefully considered. Note for instance, in i. 3, how the heightening of the dramatic interest at Antonio's entrance is marked by the change from prose to verse. It should be observed too how characters conceived in a wholly tragic or poetical spirit (Antonio, Bassanio) speak entirely, or almost entirely, in verse. Bitterness and contempt, irony and wit, abruptness of thought or feeling, all find vent more naturally and pointedly in prose than verse.

Another main use of prose is for comic parts and the speech of comic characters like the "Clowns" of the comedies, e.g. Touchstone in *As You Like It*, who never drops into blank verse. Indeed, in the comedies of Shakespeare's middle period, prose becomes practically "the language of comedy," its natural means of expression. "*Much Ado About Nothing* is a *prose* comedy."

Prose is commonly assigned to characters of humble position, e.g. servants, sailors and soldiers like Bates, Court and Williams

<sup>1</sup> Act i. 2, and iii. 1, are perfect examples. Note how the easy colloquial blank verse of a scene like the first of the play links up with the prose-parts; the transition is natural.

in *Henry V*. It is the normal medium in scenes of "low life," especially if comic, such as the Grave-diggers' scene in *Hamlet* (v. 1). In *The Tempest* Stephano and Trinculo always converse in prose, while Caliban (a poetical character) speaks wholly in verse. So in *Henry V* the Hostess, Bardolph, Nym and the Boy speak wholly in prose as being at once humorous (three of them unintentionally) and of humble status; and the same remark applies to the Grave-diggers, whom the stage-directions describe as "clowns." Compare the talk between Launcelot ("the clowne" of this play) and his father, and observe how Bassanio's answers to them are in verse (II. 2. 131-5, 139-42).

Other minor uses of prose by Shakespeare are for letters (III. 2. 310-16, IV. 1. 150-64), proclamations, documents, etc., and occasionally (as though even blank verse were too artificial) for the expression of extreme emotion and mental derangement. Compare Ophelia in the mad-scene, *Hamlet*, IV. 5; similarly Hamlet and Edgar (*King Lear*, III. 4, IV. 1) are both made to use prose when they are feigning insanity. A striking illustration of this (rare) serious use of prose occurs in III. 1. 45-63, where Shylock begins in a colloquial, though bitter, style and is carried away into an impassioned outburst of splendid eloquence.

In one of the most remarkable passages in *Hamlet* (this "goodly frame...the paragon of animals," II. 2) the prose is not specially introduced to express a particular tone of thought or emotion: it merely continues the *form* of the preceding dialogue, for the sake of general harmony of effect, but breathes into that form the spirit of the loftiest imaginative ardour. The passage, indeed, like many in the Bible, is a signal illustration of the poetical resources of prose.

Shakespeare's use of prose increases as the character of his plays grows more varied and complex. *Richard II*, written five or six years before *Henry V*, has no prose—not even in the scene (III. 4) with the Gardeners, which is of the same *genre* as the Grave-diggers' scene. The amount of prose<sup>1</sup> in a play therefore is an indication of its date, like the amount of rhyme, though not so conclusive an indication.

<sup>1</sup> Strictly, it does not come under the heading "metre"; but it is convenient to treat the subject here. See Abbott, p. 429; and *The Age of Shakespeare*, II. 117-22.

## HINTS ON SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLISH

The following elementary hints are intended to remind young students of some simple but important facts which they are apt to forget when asked to explain points of grammar and idiom in Shakespeare's English.

To begin with, avoid using the word "mistake" in connection with Shakespearian English. Do not speak of "Shakespeare's mistakes." In most cases the "mistake" will be yours, not his. Remember that things in his English which appear to us irregular may for the most part be explained by one of two principles:—

- (1) The difference between Elizabethan and modern English;
- (2) The difference between spoken and written English.

(1) As to the former: what is considered bad English now may have been considered good English in Shakespeare's time. Language must change in the space of 300 years. Elizabethan English, recollect, contains an element of Old English, i.e. inflected English that had case-endings for the nouns, terminations for the verbs, and the like. By the end of the 16th century most of these inflections had died out, but some survived, and the influence of the earlier inflected stage still affected the language. Often when we enquire into the history of some Elizabethan idiom which seems to us curious we find that it is a relic of an old usage. Let us take an example.

There are numerous cases in Shakespeare where a verb in the present tense has the inflection *-s*, though the subject is plural; cf. the following lines in *Richard II*, II. 3. 4, 5:

"These high wild hills and rough uneven ways  
*Draws* out our miles, and *makes* them wearisome."

The verbs *draws* and *makes* appear to be singular: but probably each is plural, in agreement with its plural antecedents *hills* and *ways*; *s=es* being the plural inflection of the present tense used in the Northern dialect of Old English. In the Southern dialect the inflection was *eth*; in the Midland *en*. When Shakespeare was born all three forms were getting obsolete; but all three are found in his works, *eth*<sup>1</sup> and *en*<sup>2</sup> very rarely, *es* or *s* many times. His use of the last is a good illustration (a) of the difference<sup>3</sup> between Shakespearian and modern

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *hath* and *doth* used as plurals. See Abbott, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *wax-en* in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, II. I. 56; see G. to that play.

<sup>3</sup> Another aspect of it is the free Elizabethan use of participial and adjectival terminations. Cf. "guiled," III. 2. 97; "imagined," III. 4. 52; "blessed," IV. I. 184.



English, (b) of one of the main causes of that difference—viz. the influence of a still earlier inflected English.

(2) A dramatist makes his characters speak, and tells his story through their mouths: he is not like a historian who writes the story in his own words. The English of a play which is meant to be spoken must not be judged by the same standard as the English of a History which is meant to be read. For consider how much more correct and regular in style a book usually is than a speech or a conversation. In speaking we begin a sentence one way and we may finish it in another, some fresh idea striking us or some interruption occurring. Speech is liable to constant changes, swift turns of thought; it leaves things out, supplying the omission, very likely, with a gesture; it often combines<sup>1</sup> two forms of expression. But a writer can correct and polish his composition until all irregularities are removed. Spoken English therefore is less regular<sup>2</sup> than written English; and it is to this very irregularity that Shakespeare's plays owe something of their lifelike reality. If Shakespeare made his characters speak with the correctness of a copybook, we should regard them as mere puppets, not as living beings.

Here is a passage taken from *Henry V* (iv. 3. 34-6); suppose that comment on its "grammatical peculiarities" is required:

"Rather proclaim it...  
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him depart."

Two things strike us at once—"he *which*" and "That he...Let him depart." "He *which*"<sup>3</sup> is now bad English; then it was quite regular English. The student should say that the usage was correct in Elizabethan English, and give some illustration of it. The Prayer-Book will supply him with a very familiar one.

"That he...Let him depart." A prose-writer would have finished with the regular sequence "*may depart*." But Henry V is supposed to say the words; and at the moment he is deeply stirred. Emotion leads him to pass suddenly from indirect to direct speech. The conclusion, though less regular, is far more vivid. This brief passage therefore exemplifies the difference (a) between Elizabethan English and our own, (b) between spoken English and written. It is useful always to consider whether the one principle or the other can be applied.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. iv. 1. 307.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. i. 3. 125; iv. 1. 134, 135. Note the irregular sequence of tenses in Shakespeare.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ii. 2. 145; iv. 1. 281.

Three general features of Elizabethan English should be observed:

- (1) its brevity,
- (2) its emphasis,
- (3) its tendency to interchange parts of speech.

*Brevity*: Elizabethan authors love terseness. The following couplet is from *Troilus and Cressida* (I. 3. 287, 288):

"And may that soldier a mere recreant prove,  
That means not, hath not, or is not in love!"

Put fully, the second line would run, "That means not *to be*, hath not *been*, or is not in love!" Cf. again *Richard II*, v. 5. 26, 27:

"Who sitting in the stocks refuge their shame,  
That many have and others must sit there";

i.e. 'console themselves with the thought that many have *sat* there.' This compactness of diction is very characteristic of Shakespeare. For note that the omission of the italicised words, while it shortens the form of expression, does not obscure the sense, since the words are easily supplied from the context. That is commonly the case with Shakespeare's *ellipses* or omissions: they combine brevity with clearness. Cf. the omission of the relative pronoun, a frequent and important *ellipse*, in I. 1. 90, 175.

*Emphasis*: common examples of this are the double negative (I. 2. 24, II. 1. 43, III. 2. 103, III. 4, II. 5. 35, 84), and the double comparative or superlative (IV. 1. 249).

*Parts of speech interchanged*: "almost any part of speech can be used as any other part of speech" (Abbott). Cf. "stead," I. 3. 7; "pleasure," I. 3. 7; "foot," I. 3. 107 etc.



# INDEX OF WORDS, PHRASES AND NAMES

*This list applies mainly to the NOTES; words of which longer explanations are given will be found in the GLOSSARY also.*

*The references are to the pages.*

## ABBREVIATIONS:

adj. = adjective	adv. = adverb	n. = noun
trans. = transitive	vb = verb	

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 a-brewing 107  
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